Bengaluru Sunday, April 12, 2026 Pages 26 Vol 79 No 101 ₹8

DH on Sunday

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The Power of Good

Legal reforms must for robust economy, says CJI

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Alpine beauty

From ski slopes to pine forests and stunning mountain views, Courchevel in the French Alps has many charms

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Chiselling a twist

Modern studios are approaching furniture as sculpture, pushing wood, stone, and concrete beyond their limits to create quirky forms

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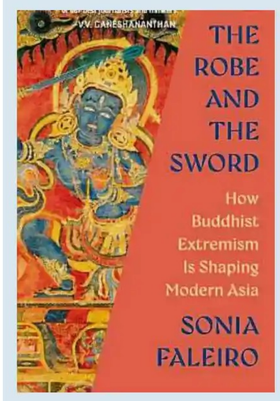

Unquiet silence

Journalist Sonia Faleiro explores how recent changes in Buddhism, a faith long imagined as serene, are shaping Asia

Battle for the ballot: How the SIR process shook West Bengal

A sweeping revision has led to mass deletions, fierce political battles and rising uncertainty ahead of the state's Assembly elections

ANIRBAN BHAUMIK
KOLKATA, DHNS

"How many of you have lost your voting rights?" Mamata Banerjee asked, pacing down the podium in her trademark style. Over 60% of the crowd, mostly women, raised their hands.

"Eh!" the chief minister paused in disbelief and exclaimed, "Who will vote then?"

The Trinamool Congress rally at Enayetpur in Malda offered one of the many snapshots of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in West Bengal and its impact on people.

Move to Rampurhat in Birbhum district. Hundreds of voters struck off the rolls stood in a long queue in front of the Sub-Divisional Officer's office to file appeals before the tribunals. Word suddenly spread that the

INSIGHT

documents for the tribunals would be accepted at a college nearly a kilometre away. A mad rush followed, as women and men, desperate to get back on the rolls, ran to queue up outside the college.

Voters check their names in the post-SIR electoral rolls in Kolkata. PTI

The scene was even more harrowing in Suri, nearly 50 km from Rampurhat. "I have already submitted all the documents they asked for, not once, but thrice, since the revision started, but they still deleted me from the rolls," said Meera Dolui, who left her home in Husnabad early in the morning to come to Suri and waited for hours in a queue to submit her documents for the fourth time. "If the tribunal rejects my appeal, I don't know where I will go".

Tanuja Bibi, who came from Dubrajpur to Suri, fainted just after submitting her documents to challenge her disenfranchisement. "My wife fell sick while we were waiting in the queue," said her husband, Mukim Sheikh, who was also struck off the list. "But we could not have left the queue after waiting for so long, else we would have had to come back another day."

Jiban Krishna Biswas left his home in Garapota, Nadia district early in the morning with his daughter Champa. The father-daughter duo — both deleted from the voter lists — walked, rode an autorickshaw, and then took a train to reach Ranaghat. They had set out to file appeals before the tribunal and seek restoration of their voting rights.

But, before they could do so, Jiban suffered a cardiac arrest. He was taken to a hospital, where he was declared dead. The 68-year-old, who worked as a cook at a construction site to support his family, had voted in many elections in his life, but died without that right.

He was not alone. Anarul Sheikh, 32, died by suicide at his home in Nalhati in Birbhum, allegedly after discovering that his name was deleted from the electoral roll last week. So did Kabil Sheikh, 37, at Sahapur in Malda.

Four more deaths linked to the deletion of names from electoral rolls have been reported in the state over the past two weeks.

Mamata alleged that the roll revision exercise had claimed about 220 lives across West Bengal. The Election Commission did not endorse the claim.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) accused her of exaggeration and of using natural deaths to discredit what it said was an essential process to clean up the electoral rolls.

The Election Commission (EC) commenced the SIR of electoral rolls in West Bengal on November 4, 2025, about six months before the assembly elections. The electorate shrank from 7.66 crore before the start of the revision to 7.08 crore after the first phase ended on December 16, with about 58 lakh names struck off as ASDDs – the absent, shifted, dead and duplicate voters.

▸ Bengal elections, Page 2

Quickly

US, Iran hold direct peace talks in Pak

American and Iranian officials were holding face-to-face talks in Pakistan on Saturday, the most significant since the 1979 Islamic revolution as the foes try to end a war that plunged West Asia into violence and rocked the world economy. The US delegation was being led by Vice President JD Vance. The Iranian delegation was being led by parliamentary speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf.
Details on Page 3

Fire kills 5 cows, destroys Rs 15-L assets

The Bengaluru police on Friday arrested a 49-year-old man for allegedly causing a fire that left five cows charred to death and destroyed multiple properties. The fire broke out after the accused allegedly set ablaze garbage. The flames spread rapidly, engulfing a cowshed and nearby establishments.
Details on Page 4

Asha Bhosle admitted to hospital

Iconic playback singer Asha Bhosle has been admitted to the Breach Candy Hospital in Mumbai following a suspected heart attack. The 92-year-old Asha Tai, as she is popularly known, has won several awards and honours, including the prestigious Padma Vibhushan.

The rise and rise of digital censorship

A series of IT Rules amendments has shifted online speech control from courts to the executive, enabling fast, opaque takedowns with limited accountability

APAR GUPTA & NIKHIL PAHWA

In *The Dark Knight Rises*, Gotham is not conquered in a single dramatic stroke but softened with the cultivation of fear and the practice of control. This allows for the appropriation of exceptional powers as the public has been conditioned to feel perpetually unsafe and hence extraordinary power begins to look like ordinary administration.

This provides a useful frame for understanding the digital censorship architecture assembled by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). Since February 2021, four expansions of the IT Rules have centralised executive power over what Indians may say, see, and share online, each presented as a minor technical adjustment, and wrapped up in the language of citizen safety.

The most recent draft, circulated on March 30, 2026, widens the net from news platforms to ordinary social media users who comment on news and current affairs, a move that plainly responds to the rise of independent commentators channelling citizen anger at public officials across the ideological spectrum. It also proposes to make informal communication such as advisories, clarifications, codes of practice

AI-GENERATED IMAGE FOR REPRESENTATION

The SUNDAY STORY

to be legally binding on platforms.

This not only exceeds the scope of the parent act but appears aimed at coercing platform compliance and redesign. For instance, if platforms are held liable for Community Notes and similar user-led fact-checking, they will remove the feature. While public pushback has been loud, the draft is only the newest layer in an 'India Censorship Stack' that already runs deep. The common principle of that stack is speed without scrutiny, prioritising pace of removal over due process. Hence, the user whose post, or even entire account, vanishes is rarely told why, or provided any real legal remedy to appeal.

Two provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000 sit at the heart of this architecture: Section 69A, which governs blocking, and Section 79, which grants platforms safe harbour for user-generated content. Both were upheld in *Shreya Singhal v Union of India* but only because the Court read in safeguards that MeitY now flagrantly disregards.

Section 69A blocking orders are issued in secrecy, in volume, at velocity. Users who write to MeitY are denied copies of the orders against them. They are summoned to Delhi for meetings without being told what they are alleged to have done wrong. Section 79, meanwhile, has been twisted even further.

Consider the four amendments to the IT Rules, 2021 under Section 79 in sequence. The October 2022 amendment created a Grievance Appellate Committee, which is an executive body sitting in appeal over platform speech decisions and rewrote Rule 3 to require intermediaries to "ensure compliance" with their own terms and make "reasonable efforts" to keep prohibited speech content off their services. Takedown grievance windows shrank to 72 hours.

▸ Digital censorship, Page 2

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MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **November 4, 2025:** Special Intensive Revision begins
- **December 16, 2025:** Draft electoral roll for the first phase of SIR released; 58 lakh voters removed from the lists in West Bengal
- **January 16, 2026:** Protests reported over the SIR hearing process
- **January 19, 2026:** Apex Court hears petitions from TMC leaders alleging discrepancies in SIR conduct; directs transparent verification of voters placed on the 'logical discrepancy' list
- **January 20-26, 2026:** Tensions flare in parts of West Bengal over SIR voter list hearings; hearing centres vandalised; micro observer assaulted in Kumarganj
-
- **February 4, 2026:** Mamata Banerjee makes submissions before SC, challenging the SIR
- **February 28, 2026:** ECI begins publishing post-SIR electoral rolls in phases, with over 60 lakh voters marked as 'under adjudication'
- **March 21:** EC constitutes 19 Appellate Tribunals to hear appeals on voter inclusion/ exclusion
- **March 24, 2026:** EC publishes the first supplementary voters' list
- **April 9, 2026:** Voter list for the first phase of polls frozen
- **April 13, 2026:** SC to hear a fresh plea along with pending petitions challenging the freezing of electoral rolls

Massive voter purge controversy deepens

Bengal elections, from P1

In the second phase, which began on December 27, 2025, 1.67 crore voters under scrutiny were summoned for hearings, including 1.36 crore flagged for "logical discrepancies" and 31 lakh others whose details did not match or link with records from the 2002 electoral roll.

The commission published another roll at the end of the process on February 28, with around 63.66 lakh voters, nearly 8.3% of the electorate, being deleted in total. In addition, over 60.06 lakh others were placed in the "under adjudication" category, with their eligibility subjected to scrutiny by judicial officers monitored by the Calcutta High Court, as directed by the Supreme Court.

The EC data released on April 6 and 7 showed that over 27 lakh people placed in the "under adjudication" category had been struck off the rolls, sending them back into queues across the state to appeal before the 19 appellate tribunals constituted for the purpose, in line with Supreme Court orders.

However, with the electoral rolls for all 294 Assembly constituencies in West Bengal now 'frozen', with the deadlines for filing nominations being over, the 91 lakh disenfranchised people will not be able to cast their votes, even if the tribunals restore their rights before the state goes to polls on April 23 and 29, unless the Supreme Court intervenes. The electorate in the state has been shrunk to about 6.77 crore.

At loggerheads

The EC and the TMC have been at loggerheads since the roll revision began in West Bengal. The party has accused the poll panel of conducting the exercise at the behest of the BJP to give the saffron party an edge in the Assembly elections.

The chief minister alleged that the removal of several senior bureaucrats and police officers after the poll schedule was announced has contributed to the situation in which seven judicial officers were held hostage by mobs protesting disenfranchisement in Kaliachak, Malda.

The latest flashpoint came on April 8, when the TMC parliamentarians alleged that the chief election commissioner had asked them to "get lost" during a meeting at the Nirvachan Sadan. The EC later posted on X its "straight talks" to the TMC — that elections in West Bengal "this time" would be "violence-free", "intimidation-free", and "inducement-free", as well as "without any chhappa (large-scale fake voting), booth jamming and source-Jamming". The unprecedented post on social media appeared to echo the BJP's allegations about the methods the TMC had used to win elections in the past.

The TMC won 213 of the 294 seats in the 2021 Assembly polls, securing 3.28 crore votes (47.9%), while the BJP secured 2.63 crore votes (38.1%) and 77 seats. The 91-lakh deletion from the electoral rolls exceeds the 65-lakh vote difference between the TMC and the BJP.

A study by the Sabar Institute in Kolkata found that Muslims account for nearly 25% of residents in Nandigram but constituted around 95% of voters deleted during scrutiny by the judicial officers. The study also revealed that over 40% of voters removed after adjudication in Bhabanipur were Muslims, although the community accounted for around 20% of the population. Suvendu had defeated Mamata in Nandigram by a narrow margin in 2021.

The North and South 24 Parganas have recorded the highest voter deletions since the SIR began in November 2025, with 12.6 lakh names struck off from 83 lakh voters and 10.91 lakh from 85.94 lakh, respectively. In 2021, the TMC had won 28 of 33 seats in North 24 Parganas and 30 of 31 in South 24 Parganas, while the BJP secured five and none, respectively. The Muslim-majority Murshidabad (66%) and Malda (51%) districts saw the sharpest deletions from among "under adjudication" voters — 4.55 lakh and 2.39 lakh, respectively.

What may also give the BJP an edge is that around 57 lakh of the deleted voters are women – a constituency the TMC has carefully consolidated as one of its most dependable support bases, second only to the minority community, through welfare schemes such as Kanyashree and Lakshmir Bhandar.

Not without costs

However, for the BJP, the gains from the roll revision are not without costs. The deleted voters include a large number of Hindu Matuas, who migrated from Bangladesh to India, and have since grown into a significant electoral force that could influence outcomes in around 45 constituencies in West Bengal.

"The BJP leaders said that the revision of the rolls was aimed at detecting and deporting illegal Muslim migrants. But why are they now targeting Hindu Matuas, who came here as refugees?" said Navin Biswas, a leader of the community, who had hosted Home Minister Amit Shah at his modest home in New Town, Rajarhat, for lunch a few years ago. "We are disappointed with the BJP leaders of the state and the Centre."

The TMC insiders pointed out that a majority — around 57 lakh — of the 91 lakh deleted voters were Hindus, while around 31 lakh were Muslims. "The BJP claimed that the roll revision was necessary to protect Hindus. But the exercise has hurt Hindus the most in West Bengal," said a senior leader of the ruling party.

Prakash Chik Baraik, a Rajya Sabha member, has been camping in Alipurduar to oversee the TMC's poll preparations. "We have provided legal help and aid to people struck off the electoral rolls. The SIR will ultimately hurt the BJP as it has put people in great trouble," he said.

Three subdivisions in Cooch Behar – Dinhata, Mathabhanga and Mekhliganj – are most affected by the SIR. Some of these areas share borders with Bangladesh. The roll revision has become a huge issue with the people, who were promised Indian citizenship following the exchange of 162 enclaves under the 2015 agreement between India and Bangladesh. The dwellers have been demanding that their names be included based on the 2015 electoral rolls and not the 2002 documents.

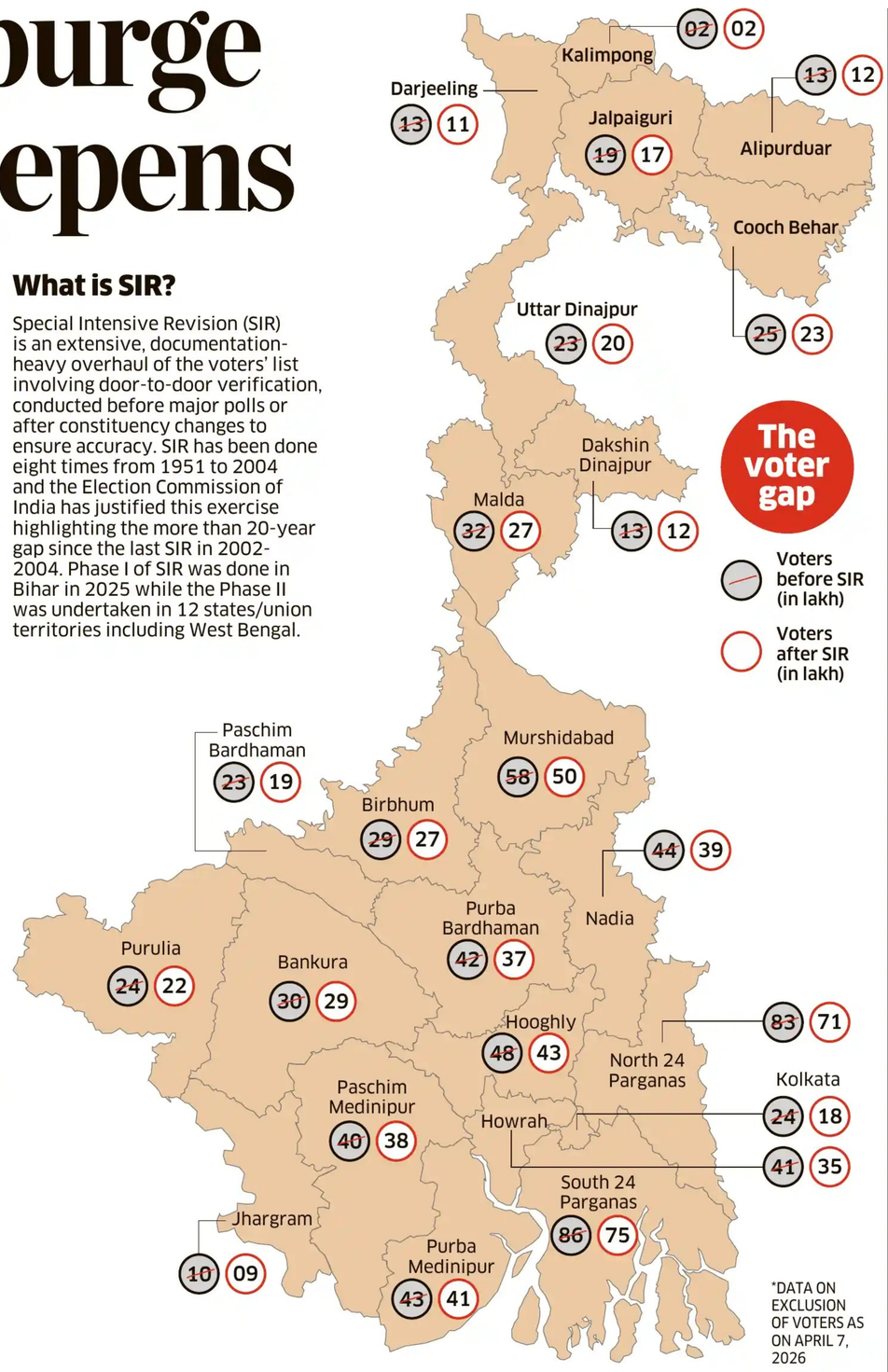
A Supreme Court bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant clarified that the court was not suggesting that every tribunal decision delivered on the final day must automatically be incorporated. However, where rulings extend beyond the cut-off, inclusion in the supplementary list may not be feasible.

The court then emphasised that such rights cannot be permanently extinguished, warning that denying them altogether voting rights would create an "extremely oppressive situation." The court permitted appellate tribunals to consider fresh documents in electoral roll disputes, but only after verifying their authenticity.

(With inputs from Ashish Tripathi in New Delhi and Sumit Pande in Darjeeling)

What is SIR?

Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is an extensive, documentation-heavy overhaul of the voters' list involving door-to-door verification, conducted before major polls or after constituency changes to ensure accuracy. SIR has been done eight times from 1951 to 2004 and the Election Commission of India has justified this exercise highlighting the more than 20-year gap since the last SIR in 2002-2004. Phase I of SIR was done in Bihar in 2025 while the Phase II was undertaken in 12 states/union territories including West Bengal.



*DATA ON EXCLUSION OF VOTERS AS ON APRIL 7, 2026

Drop in voter count

2026 Assembly	2024 Lok Sabha	2021 Assembly	2019 Lok Sabha	2016 Assembly	2014 Lok Sabha	2011 Assembly
6.77 cr	7.6 cr	7.33 cr	6.98 cr	6.58 cr	6.27 cr	5.62 cr

10.56% drop in electorate in 9 states/UTs

- Nearly 10.56% of voters have been removed across nine states and union territories in the final electoral rolls after the conclusion of SIR Phase II
- Uttar Pradesh has been deletion of 2.04 crore names, a 13.24% drop from the pre-SIR figure of 15.44 crore
- Poll-bound Tamil Nadu has recorded deletion of 11.6% voters while Chhattisgarh stands at 11.8%
- Kerala was the only poll-bound state with minor drop of 2.7%
- Andaman & Nicobar Islands lead in percentage terms with a 16.9% drop
- Among the phase II states, Uttar Pradesh followed by West Bengal has the highest absolute deletions

The poll conundrum

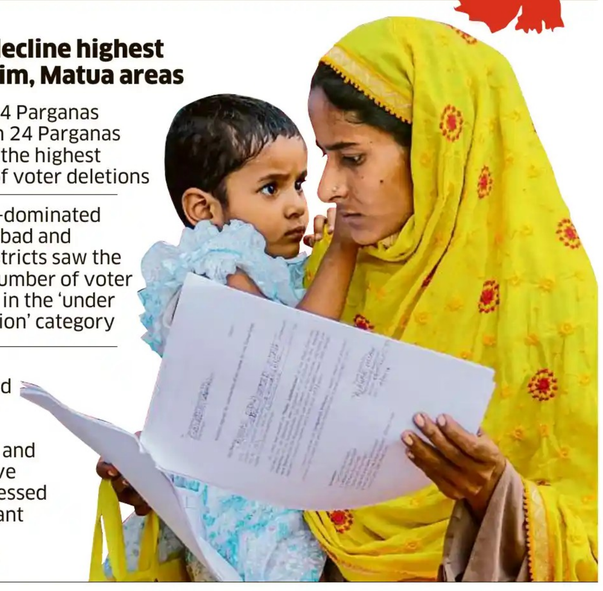
Following the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in Bihar,** Phase II of the exercise was launched across 12 states and union territories, including West Bengal

- The SIR of electoral rolls ahead of the 2026 West Bengal Assembly elections led to a nearly **12% drop in voters** on the rolls
- The scale of **deletions and demographic trends** in certain constituencies have sparked controversy and are shaping the election mood

Voter maths in West Bengal

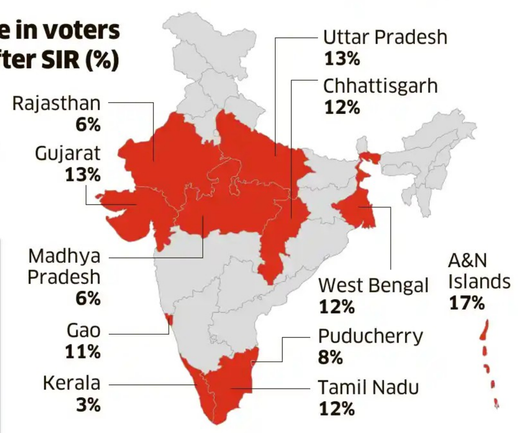
7.66 cr Voters before SIR	27.16 lakh Voters excluded through adjudication
6.77 cr Voters after SIR	90.83 lakh Total voters excluded after SIR

Voter decline highest in Muslim, Matua areas



- North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas recorded the highest number of voter deletions
- Muslim-dominated Murshidabad and Malda districts saw the highest number of voter deletions in the 'under adjudication' category
- Matua-dominated areas in North 24 Parganas and Nadia have also witnessed a significant voter removals
- Kolkata North and Kolkata South have seen the highest proportion of voter shrinkage
- Nearly 63% of deleted voters are Hindus and 34% are Muslims; however, Muslims appear disproportionately affected relative to their population share

Decline in voters after SIR (%)



Source: ECI, Patra's Law Chamber, media reports

COMPILED BY **DIVYASHRI MUDAKAVI** DH GRAPHIC: **SAGAR M S**

When process overrides the Right to Vote

S Y QURAISHI

The ongoing controversy surrounding the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls raises a fundamental legal question: can the process of verification override the statutory and constitutional right to be enrolled as a voter?

The answer lies not in administrative practice, but in the law itself.

The Representation of the People Act, 1950 provides the framework. Section 21(1) makes the position clear: the electoral roll for each constituency comes into force immediately upon its final publication. This is not a tentative or provisional arrangement. Once published, the roll is legally operative and constitutes the basis for the exercise of the franchise. Section 21(3) empowers the Election Commission to order a special revision of the electoral roll for any constituency or part thereof. This power is often invoked to ensure accuracy and integrity. However, the provision must be read along with its proviso, which is crucial. It states that the electoral roll, as in force at the time of the issuance of such a direction, shall continue to be in force until the completion of the special revision.

The implication is unambiguous. Even when a special revision is underway, the existing roll does not lapse. It continues to have legal validity until the revision process is completed and a new roll is finally published.

This statutory continuity is not accidental. It reflects a legislative intent to ensure that the right to vote is not disrupted by administrative processes. Revision is meant to improve the roll, not to suspend it.

A further safeguard is built into Section 23 of the Act. The proviso to this section requires that the Electoral Registration Officer shall give the person concerned a reasonable opportunity of being heard before any adverse decision is taken regarding inclusion or deletion. This is a statutory expression of the principles of natural justice.

Taken together, these provisions establish a clear legal framework. First, the electoral roll becomes operative upon final publication. Second, even when a special revision is ordered, the existing roll continues in force until the process is completed. Third, no individual can be excluded without being given a reasonable opportunity to be heard. In this light, any situation in which eligible citizens are unable to vote because their applications remain pending, or because the appeal process could not be completed, raises serious legal concerns. Pendency is not a ground for exclusion. Nor can administrative delay dilute a constitutional right.

The law recognises the need for accuracy, but it places equal emphasis on continuity and fairness. The balance is deliberate. An electoral system that prioritises procedural perfection at the cost of participation risks undermining its own legitimacy. The right to be enrolled as a voter flows from Article 326 of the Constitution. The statutory provisions governing electoral rolls must therefore be interpreted in a manner that advances inclusion, not exclusion.

Verification is necessary. But when the process begins to override the right itself, the system must pause and correct course.

The electoral roll is not merely an administrative document. It is the gateway to democratic participation. The law ensures that this gateway remains open — even as it is being refined.

(Quraishi is former Chief Election Commissioner of India and the author of 'An Undocumented Wonder - The Making of the Great Indian Election')

Digital censorship, from Page 1

When platforms become instruments of state control

On the surface, the change was procedural. In substance, it was structural. It converted platforms from passive hosts into active enforcers, and positioned the Union government as the ultimate arbiter of permissible speech. The shift was unmistakable and required platforms to remove more, remove faster, do so under the shadow of government review.

In effect, our speech is being censored by the government via platforms that are meant to carry it.

The April 2023 amendment went further. Tucked alongside online-gaming provisions that were widely welcomed by industry was the fact-checking power under Rule 3(1)(b)(v). It required intermediaries to make "reasonable efforts" not to host speech that, "in respect of any business of the Central Government," was identified as fake, false or misleading by a fact-check unit designated by the Ministry itself.

In September 2024, the Bombay High Court struck down the amendment as unconstitutional. The Supreme Court issued notice in the Union's appeal in March 2026 but declined to stay the judgment. Therefore, the fact-check unit mechanism does not stand on secure legal footing.

The October 2025 amendment formalised the Sahyog portal, which is a one-stop online platform for police officers and bureaucrats across India to demand takedowns. Rule 3(1)(d) now provides that "actual knowledge" arises either from a court order or from a "reasoned intimation" issued by an officer of Joint Secretary rank or above (Deputy Inspector General in policing contexts), followed by monthly review by a Secretary-rank official. Removal is required within 36 hours.

Without safeguards

Presented as a safeguard, the change in practice does the opposite: it cements a centralised, portal-based censorship channel under Section 79, without the procedural architecture of Section 69A and the 2009 Blocking Rules. Hence, there is no public disclosure, notice or hearing for users or originators of content.

How many of the 29,118 takedown orders sent to X between January and June 2025 have been meaningfully reviewed by a Joint Secretary? The review process remains internal to the executive by the very body that passed the initial order. The Supreme Court in the landmark Shreya Singhal case tolerated Section 69A precisely because of recorded reasons, committee review, and the possibility of being heard. By contrast, these amendments treat constitutional rights as friction and reroute executive power into a parallel, lower-threshold censorship channel masquerading as a safe-harbour exception.

The February 2026 amendment built on this trajectory and intensified it further. The Rule 3(1)(d) takedown window collapsed from 36 hours to three. General grievance resolution timelines dropped from 15 days to seven. The window to take down intimate content fell from 24 hours to two, and other content, including speech, shrank from 72 hours to 36.

Alongside this, an entirely new regime was introduced for "synthetically generated information". Platforms offering tools that might create or disseminate such content are required to deploy "reasonable and appropriate technical measures," including automated systems, to prevent unlawful synthetic content. Lawful synthetic content must be prominently labelled and embedded with permanent provenance markers.

Further, significant social media intermediaries must require user declarations, verify them technically, and label confirmed synthetic content before publication. Failure to comply is treated as a breach of due diligence, which were originally largely about issuing terms and conditions.

This is the threshold being crossed. The amendment moves from reactive takedown toward pre-censorship and continuous platform surveillance. The definition of synthetic content is broad and subjective, hinging on whether material appears authentic to a "reasonable person." Platforms, facing legal risk, will deploy error-prone automated systems, label widely, remove quickly, and prefer false positives to liability. Compressed timelines make human review effectively impossible, and as ever, users receive no notice of the order that erased them.

Read together, the four amendments form a single trajectory. The distinction between lawful assessment and platform-side compliance management has been merged. Power thus shifts from courts and the structured safeguards of Section 69A towards executive discretion and the platform's own profit incentives to maintain access to the Indian market.

It is an infrastructure that has been assembled in public, one rule at a time, while attention is often focussed on individual instances of censorship, cases that trigger responses shaped by personal and political beliefs, and are sometimes even defended in the name of safety.

In *The Dark Knight*, Bruce Wayne hands Lucius Fox a machine that turns every phone in Gotham into a sonar receiver, mapping the city in real time. The purpose is urgent and the threat is real but Fox understands the deeper danger. The problem is not merely who uses the device but the very existence of it legitimises extraordinary power. As history has shown, unaccountable power built for exceptional use does not remain exceptional for long.

That is the frame for MeitY's censorship architecture. Each amendment is justified as necessary, targeted and reasonable, or perhaps even procedural. Each one is framed as a response to some urgent harm ranging from misinformation to deepfake crises. But the deeper constitutional injury lies in the system being built: a state equipped to secure removals at speed, in secrecy, and at scale, with only weak obligations to explain itself to those whose rights it burdens.

There is, unfortunately, no Lucius Fox at Electronics Niketan but only a permanent Digital Public Infrastructure for censorship.

(Apar Gupta is the Founding Director of the Internet Freedom Foundation and Nikhil Pahwa is the Founder of Medianama)

US, Iran hold face-to-face peace talks in Pakistan

HIGH HOPES: Highest level contact since 1979 Islamic revolution

ISLAMABAD/TEHRAN, AFP

American and Iranian officials were holding face-to-face talks in Pakistan on Saturday, the most significant since the 1979 Islamic revolution as the foes try to end a war that plunged West Asia into violence and rocked the world economy.

The trilateral direct negotiations were taking place with host Pakistan in capital Islamabad, a senior White House official said, a departure from recent practice where both sides held talks via a mediator while seated in separate rooms.

Iranian media said the US was making "excessive demands" on the Strait of Hormuz during talks. "The US is making excessive demands regarding the strait... the US has also made unacceptable demands on several other issues," the Fars news agency said.

The Iranian state television reported that two rounds of talks have taken place between Iranian and US officials with a third round expected on Saturday evening or Sunday.

"According to information provided to the state TV correspondent by a person close to the negotiating team, another round of negotiations will likely be held tonight or tomorrow," state broadcaster IRIB reported.

The US delegation was being led by Vice President JD Vance, special envoy Steve Witkoff and President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, the official said, making it the highest level of American contact since the Islamic republic was established.

The Iranian delegation, composed of more than 70 members, was being led by parliamentary speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, joined by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.

They had earlier decided to begin talks with their US counterparts after meeting with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, according to Iranian media reports.

"Commending the commitment of both delegations to engage constructively, the Prime Minister expressed the hope that these talks would serve as a stepping stone toward durable peace in the region," Sharif's office said.

The talks came as Trump said the US had started "clearing out" the strategic Strait of Hormuz, which Iran has virtually blocked and through which one-fifth of the world's crude passes at peace time, as US media reported that two US warships had crossed it on Saturday.

The US leader called it "a favour" to other countries, but a senior Iranian military official quoted by state television denied the reports of US ships crossing the key waterway.

While Trump confirmed that talks among the US, Iran and Pakistan had begun, he said he didn't know how successful they could be. When asked how negotiations would go, Trump said: "I have no idea".

Iran has previously said that any agreement to end the war must include the unfreezing of sanctioned Iranian assets as well as an end to Israel's war against Hezbollah, which Vance has said will not be up for discussion in Islamabad.

Iranian state television's correspondent at the talks said he understood that progress had been made on these issues. A US official denied reports Washington had agreed to unfreeze Iran assets held in Qatar.

Despite progress, the warring parties made no attempt to hide their mutual suspicion.

"Our experience in negotiating with the Americans has always been met with failure and broken promises," Ghalibaf said, shortly after landing in Pakistan.

▸ Iran, Page 6

Pak PM Shehbaz Sharif and Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Ghalibaf. REUTERS

US V-P JD Vance (C) being received at Islamabad airport by top Pak officials. AFP

FROM WEST ASIA

Lebanon's health ministry says 10 people killed by Israeli strikes on south Lebanon

- Israel's military says it struck more than 200 Hezbollah targets in Lebanon in last 24 hrs
- Israel's US ambassador tells his Lebanese counterpart he "refused to discuss a ceasefire with the Hezbollah terrorist organisation"
- Digital monitor Netblocks says Iran's internet blackout has lasted more than 1,000 hours
- Israeli PM says attacks succeeded in "crushing" Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes
- US president vows to have Strait of Hormuz open "with or without" Iran's cooperation

"An even more difficult stage lies ahead. This is that stage which, in English, is called the equivalent of 'make or break'."
SHEHBAZ SHARIF, Pakistan PM

Pak military contingent reaches Saudi

A Pakistani military contingent comprising around 13,000 soldiers and 10 to 18 jets has reached Saudi Arabia as part of a joint strategic defence agreement signed last year, the Gulf kingdom announced on Saturday. The contingent has been deployed to King Abdulaziz Air Base in the eastern sector.
Details on Page 9

State govt hikes engineering fees by 7.5% from current academic year

BENGALURU, DHNS: Fees for undergraduate engineering courses will go up by 7.5% for the coming academic year.

The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Higher Education Minister Dr M C Sudhakar recently with representatives of private institutions.

According to sources, colleges had demanded a 10% to 15% hike, but the minister settled for 7.5%.

The engineering course fees were hiked by 7.5% in 2025-26 too. Last year the fee was hiked by 5% even for the seats at government colleges.

Details on Page 6

HC orders CBI probe into Hebbal prime land acquisition

'Monumental fraud' by 'non-existent' entity, govt officials

AMBARISH B
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Karnataka High Court has ordered a CBI probe against government officials and directors of a "non-existent entity" for allegedly committing "monumental fraud" to deprive landowners in Bengaluru of their property for pittance.

It is alleged that about 55 acres of land was acquired by the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) in Hebbal and Amanikere Hebbal villages during 2002-2004 for a tourism development project mooted by the Lakeview Development Corporation Private Limited, which was not incorporated at the time, and the land use was changed later to benefit the private entity.

"The entire exercise of acquiring the land for a non-existent entity was nothing but a monumental fraud committed by the authorities in a criminal conspiracy with the Directors of Lakeview Development Corporation Private Limited, which was incorporated only in the year 2011. This was a fraud on statute to deprive the landowners of their valuable property for pittance at the behest of a non-existent entity," a division bench comprising Justices DK Singh and Justice Tara Vitasta Ganju said in the order dated April 10.

The division bench quashed the entire acquisition and slapped a cost of Rs 10 lakh on Lakeview Tourism Corporation, for whom the land was acquired.

The land in question is adjacent to the Hebbal flyover in Bengaluru.

▸ HC orders, Page 6

WHAT IS THE CASE?

- **2000:** KIADB receives application for land acquisition for tourism project
- **2002-04:** KIADB acquires 55 acres in Hebbal
- **2011:** Pvt firm incorporated
- **2012:** Single bench dismisses the petitions filed by landowners
- **2013:** Landowners file appeal
- **2023:** Govt allows the pvt entity's request for change of land use
- **2026:** Division bench quashes acquisition

Centre hikes duty on diesel, ATF to curb exports

GYANENDRA KESHRI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Centre on Saturday sharply increased the export duty on diesel and aviation turbine fuel (ATF) to curb outbound shipments of key petroleum products in order to ensure adequate domestic supply.

Export duty on diesel has been hiked to Rs 55.5 per litre from earlier Rs 21.5 per litre. Duty on ATF, which is used to power aircraft, has been hiked from Rs 29.5 per litre to Rs 42 per litre. Export duty on petrol continues to remain nil.

The Union Finance Ministry on Saturday issued a gazette notification in this regard.

The higher taxes have been imposed with immediate effect.

The increase in duty is likely to dissuade refiners like Reliance Industries from exporting the fuels and to ensure adequate availability in the domestic market.

Disruption in the global supply chain due to the US-Israel-Iran conflict has led to scarcity and sharp jumps in prices of petroleum products in most parts of the world.

The Centre has significantly adjusted taxes to keep prices steady and ensure adequate supply in the domestic markets.

▸ Diesel, Page 6

Misri discusses deepening nuclear energy ties, LPG trade with US officials in Washington

WASHINGTON, PTI: India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri discussed furthering energy cooperation with the US in nuclear power and new areas such as coal gasification and LPG exports in his meeting with US Energy Secretary Chris Wright.

Misri's discussion with Wright focused on "advancing energy security, deepening bilateral energy trade, and identifying new avenues to strengthen the India-US Energy Partnership", the Indian Embassy here said. US Ambassador to India Sergei Gor said America was ready to cooperate with India on civil nuclear cooperation.

Details on Page 9

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri.

SPLASH DOWN

'Happy & healthy': Astronauts back after lunar high

Orion spacecraft splashes down in the Pacific Ocean on Friday. REUTERS

WASHINGTON, PTI

Amid claps and cheers, four astronauts of Nasa's Artemis-II mission splashed down in the Pacific after a historic flight to the moon — the first by humans in more than 50 years.

"The path to the moon is open but the work ahead is greater than the work behind," Amit Kshatriya, Indian-origin Nasa Associate Administrator told a press conference shortly after the Artemis-II crew returned to earth off the coast of San Diego on Friday.

The lunar flyby mission involving Commander Reid Wiseman, pilot Victor Glover, Christina Koch and Canada's Jeremy Hansen was the first journey to the moon since the Apollo 17 mission in December 1972.

Rick Henfling, the flight director, said the Artemis II astronauts are "happy and healthy and ready to come home to Houston".

Artemis II was the first crewed mission to utilise Nasa's Space Launch System rocket and Orion crew module — demonstrating that the agency's equipment can propel astronauts out of Earth's orbit and bring them safely home.

The mission flew 11,26,922 km; its peak velocity was 39,693 kmph; and the flight had an entry range of 3,149 km but landed within 1.6 km of its target.

It was a triumphant homecoming for the crew of four whose record-breaking lunar flyby revealed not only swaths of the moon's far side never seen before by human eyes but a total solar eclipse. They emerged from their bobbing capsule into the sunlight one by one.

Henfling said his team 'breathed a sigh of relief' once the side hatch opened on the Orion Integrity after it splashed down in the Pacific Ocean. "We all breathed a sigh of relief once the hatch opened up, that's when we brought the team in," he said.

Nasa now aims to land humans on the moon where it also plans to set up a habitat.

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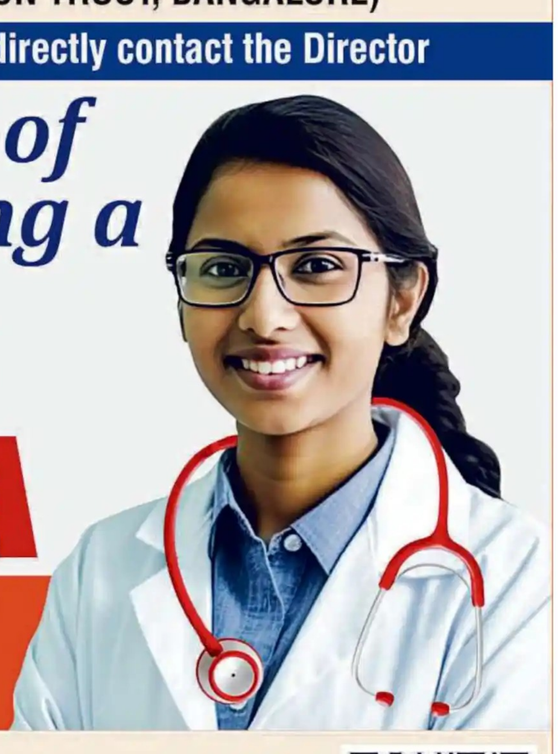

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POLICY BLINDSPOT Delayed projects, low completion rates continue to limit impact

Bengaluru housing schemes still fail to serve the urban poor

SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

In a city like Bengaluru, migrant labourers arrive in large numbers and play a crucial role in construction and keeping the city running. Yet, their housing needs remain a blind spot, rarely discussed or addressed by the authorities.

The issue surfaces mainly during encroachment drives, like the Kogilu clearance in December 2025. With State housing woefully inadequate and delayed, encroachments are inevitable, activists say.

Data provided by the Karnataka Housing Department indicates the same. The department provides housing to Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and Lower Income Groups (LIG) under two schemes — Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) and the CM's Multi-Storied Bengaluru Housing Scheme. Nearly a decade later, sanctioned houses remain fewer than the homeless population, and progress is below 30%.

Under the CM's scheme, 45,124 houses were sanctioned, with only 7,890 completed and 34,054 under progress. Under PMAY (U), 34,898 were sanctioned, of which only 15,481 are complete. Overall, of 80,022 houses sanctioned since 2015, less than 30% have been completed.

STATUS OF HOUSING SCHEMES IN BENGALURU

Schemes	Sanctioned	Completed	In progress	Yet to start
Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) (2015)	34,898	15,481	8,376	11,041
CM's Multi-Storeyed Bengaluru Housing Scheme (2017)	45,124	7,890	34,054	3,180
Overall progress since 2015	**80,022**	**23,371**	**42,430**	**14,221**

Housing complexes built under the CM's Multi-Storeyed Bengaluru Housing Scheme in Baiyappanahalli, Byatarayanapura.

"In a city like Bengaluru, where demand is so high, if projects take so long to complete, encroachments will only increase. The government has also not fully followed the guidelines of PMAY (U). There are many gaps in the process, and these need to be addressed to ensure the housing schemes have an impact on the ground," said Narasimha Murthy, convenor, Slum Janandolana, Karnataka.

According to a survey conducted by the housing department in 2017, there are 98,487 homeless people in Bengaluru Urban district. This is a gross undercount, Murthy argued. "These figures do not reflect the ground reality. The survey counted only those living on the roadside. However, many people live in small tents and pay rent. They also need to be considered. Including them, the number of homeless may go up to 20 lakh in Bengaluru," he said.

What makes the situation worse is that only around 80,000 houses were sanctioned in the last decade, while the survey itself estimated nearly one lakh homeless people, and the pace of completion remains very low.

Issac Amrutha Raj, state president of the Slum Janara Sangatane-Karnataka, said even the reported 23,000 completed houses may be inflated. "On the ground, we do not see so many completed houses or beneficiaries. These numbers appear to be an eyewash," he said.

Further, although PMAY (U) mandates that a demand survey be conducted in 2025, the exercise has not yet been taken up, Murthy said.

Why the delay?

Senior officials from Rajiv Gandhi Housing Corporation Limited (RGHCL), which implements both housing projects in Bengaluru, said delays are partly due to beneficiaries failing to make payments.

"With government grants, we can begin construction. However, to complete projects, we depend on contributions from beneficiaries. While many pay the initial amount, they often do not pay the remaining balance, which affects progress. Despite this, we have tried to use available funds to complete as many houses as possible," a senior RGHCL official said.

Raj noted that policy changes have also affected uptake. "Earlier, combined state and central government grants covered nearly 90% of the cost. However, over the last decade, this has changed, and the burden on beneficiaries has increased to around 50%. This has made it expensive, and many are unable to pay," he said.

Sources added that the cost of land acquisition and related legal issues have also affected project locations and contributed to delays.

Are the houses adequate?

DH visited a few of these housing complexes. While the houses had basic amenities and construction quality was satisfactory, location and access to public transport remain major concerns.

For instance, at a housing complex in Baiyappanahalli in Byatarayanapura, the approach road runs past sand and cement factories, making commuting difficult. The nearest bus stop is over 5 km away.

While the houses themselves are adequate, these projects are often poorly integrated into the cityscape.

Broken roads, open drains worry Choodasandra residents

MJ Nagar Road in Choodasandra.

Rapid apartment growth, mapping issues have complicated repair efforts, say officials

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

Adding to the city's list of ever-growing infrastructure issues, especially the poor condition of roads, is Choodasandra in Anekal taluk. Residents in the locality have raised concerns about the accident-prone nature of the roads, endangering the lives of the public.

A seven-month pregnant woman residing in the locality shared multiple instances of physical pain caused by travelling on roads in and around her apartment. "Early on in pregnancy, I tried travelling by auto, but I had to hold on tightly because of how much it would shake. There are so many potholes and dents that at times I have almost fallen. Since then, I've only been travelling in our car. But even then, even before we complete the stretch of road outside the apartment, I have to ask my husband to take a break, because the potholes cause severe pain in my stomach," said Ranjini (name changed), 35, who is forced to use the same road to travel to the hospital every day.

Residents worry about the state of the roads during the monsoon. "Throughout the year, the road is already prone to accidents. There are potholes, and drains are uncovered in some parts, causing vehicles to lose control. This will only get worse as the monsoon begins, and motorists won't be able to see the potholes. The road has only worsened in the last five years," said Nandakishore Karanam, a 42-year-old software engineer, adding that residents are yet to receive any aid from the authorities despite multiple complaints.

Residents also said that some stretches of road in the neighbourhood are missing from public maps and are therefore being ignored by local authorities. They also pointed to the worsening garbage dumping problem in the area.

Bhaskar, Bill Collector, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, told *DH* that efforts are being made to improve the road. "We're doing everything we can to improve the condition. The issue is that recently, multiple apartments have come up in the neighbourhood, and to provide access to these apartments, a private road has been converted into a public road, and now it comes under our jurisdiction. We have written to the authorities concerned to include the road in public maps, but the process is still ongoing," he said.

Doctor booked for harassing woman employee

BENGALURU, DHNS: A doctor heading a private multi-specialty hospital in HSR Layout has been booked for allegedly sexually harassing a woman employee, who quit her job after accusing him of making repeated inappropriate remarks and continuing to message her despite her objections.

A senior police officer said the 29-year-old complainant, who had been working as an accountant at the hospital since July 2025, alleged that Dr Rakesh Jayaprakash of Dr Heal Hospital would frequently approach her during work hours and pass inappropriate comments about her appearance. He would allegedly stare at her while she was in uniform and make objectionable remarks, including asking her to change her attire. Despite her repeatedly warning him against such behaviour, he is said to have continued his conduct.

The harassment allegedly extended beyond the workplace. A week ago, the accused sent her objectionable texts on WhatsApp and also contacted her over a phone call to make inappropriate comments about her looks.

Her husband, who overheard the conversation, objected to her continuing in the job, leading to a dispute at home. Following the incidents, the victim quit her job and approached the police to file a case.

Based on a complaint, a case has been registered at the HSR Layout police station, and the accused doctor is currently out of station. "Once he returns, we will initiate legal action," the police officer said.

Protest at Freedom Park against transgender law changes

BENGALURU, DHNS

Hundreds of activists, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and civil society groups gathered at Freedom Park on Saturday to protest against the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026. The demonstration, organised by the National Network for Gender and Sexual Minorities Alliance (NNGSM) and the Coalition for Sex Workers and Sexual Minorities Rights (SMR), called for the immediate repeal of the amendments, which they claim systematically dismantle the hard-won legal recognition of transgender and non-binary persons.

Under the 2019 Act, individuals could self-identify their gender; however, the 2026 Amendment mandates a recommendation from a medical board led by a Chief Medical Officer (CMO).

Activists protest against the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026, at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Saturday. DH PHOTO/B K JANARDHAN

"The state is effectively reclaiming ownership over our bodies," said Mallu Kumbara, one of the protest organisers. "By narrowing the definition of 'transgender' to only specific socio-cultural identities and intersex variations, the law excludes trans men and thousands of non-binary individuals."

According to 2011 Census data, India has roughly 4.87 lakh individuals identified as the 'third gender', though community leaders argue the actual number is significantly higher. Activists noted that as of early 2026, only about 35,000 individuals have successfully obtained identity cards — a process they fear will now become even more gatekept.

The protesters also highlighted the surveillance aspect of the new law, which requires medical institutions to report gender-affirming surgeries to government authorities. This, they argue, is a direct violation of the right to privacy upheld by the Supreme Court in the Puttaswamy judgment.

The Act also introduces severe penalties for compelling or alluring individuals to present as transgender. Activists fear these provisions, intended to curb forced conversions, will instead be weaponised against found families and NGOs providing support to runaway queer youth.

"We are not asking for charity; we are asking for the Constitution to be applied to us as it is to any other citizen," said Vaishali Vasudevan, a community representative.

Man goes missing, phone traced to Chittoor

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 50-year-old senior manager with Hombale Construction was reported missing, and his mobile phone was last traced to Chittoor district.

The man has been identified as Hari Chiluveru, a resident of Kengeri.

According to the complaint filed by his wife, Hari left home on the evening of April 10 and did not return.

Hari works in the finance and audit section of Hombale Constructions, and police suspect that he may have travelled towards Tirupati.

A missing person complaint has been registered. Cops also suspect a family dispute, as Hari had reportedly argued with his wife before leaving the house, a police officer said.

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PRM/KA/RERA/1251/308/PR/230126/008427 SARJAPURA G+4 ₹ 60.01 - 83.25 Lakhs* 8880 003 003
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◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

World Homeopathy Day: Inauguration by Dinesh Gundu Rao; guests include Dr C N Ashwath Narayan, Lakshmikantananda, and Sunil Panwar; presided by Veerabrahmachari; Karnataka Homeopathic Medical Association; A V Rama Rao Gallery, Chemical Sciences Building, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), C V Raman Road, Malleshwaram; 8.30 am

Inauguration of ARC Cancer Hospital: Inauguration by Dinesh Gundu Rao; presence of Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji; guests include Tejasvi Surya, Dr C N Manjunath, Ramalinga Reddy, Krishna Byre Gowda, K H Muniyappa, and Uday B Garudachar; ARC Cancer Hospital, No 210, Hombegowda Nagar, Hosur Main Road, Wilson Garden; 11.30 am

Release of Postage Stamps on India's Manned Space Flight Program: Guests include V Narayanan and Shubhanshu Shukla; presided by K. Prakash; Department of Posts; Meghdoot Auditorium, GPO; 11 am

Release of Dr Rajkumar's Autobiography and Photo Gallery: Release of 'Kathanayakana Kathe' and inauguration of 'Glimpses of Art Life' Photo Gallery by Shivarajkumar and Geetha Shivarajkumar; keynote by Baraguru Ramachandrappa; guests include Jayamala and Bhargava; Jnana Jyothi Auditorium, Central College Campus; 11 am

CULTURAL

88th Sree Ramanavami Music Festival: Coronation of Sri Rama at 8 am; presentation of 'SVN Global Award' to N Rajam at 6 pm; violin concert by N Rajam, Sangeeta Shankar, and Nandini Shankar accompanied by Ravindra Yavagal on Tabla at 7 pm; Fort High School Grounds, Chamarajpet

Multi-City Dance Festival: Sanskritiki and Katha Nritya Aangan; Basava Bhavana, Basaveshwara Circle; 9.30 am

33rd Sree Ramanavami Music Festival: Vocal performance by R V Akshay and R V Abhishek; Violin-Veena duet by H K Venkatram and Jayanthi Kumaresh accompanied by Tumkur B. Ravishankar and Pramath Kiran; Sree Vani Kala Kendra, Basaveshwaranagar; 4.15 pm

Kannada Drama Festival 2026: Performance of the play 'Haggada Kone' by Drishyaranga Kala Sangha; directed by T Nagaraj; Udayabhanu Kala Sangha, Kempegowda Nagar; 6.30 pm

Invites to be published in this column should be sent to: **incitytoday@deccanherald.co.in.** Please note that hard copies will not be accepted

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST

Partly cloudy sky

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	34.8°C
Minimum	24.4°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	--
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	85%
Sunset (April 12)	6:32 pm
Sunrise (April 13)	6:10 am
Moonrise	1:30 am
Moonset	1:07 pm

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

LOST PAWS

Activists, residents demand probe into missing community dogs

Protesters raise their voice against the alleged abduction and killing of community dogs, at Freedom Park, on Saturday. DH PHOTO/B K JANARDHAN

Protesters' demands

- A swift investigation and prosecution of the offenders.
- An audit of SWM contractors to prevent illegal animal relocation.
- A public circular clarifying that removing community dogs is a punishable offence.
- A commitment from the corporation to protect vaccinated and neutered community animals.

BENGALURU, DHNS

Hundreds of citizens and animal welfare activists gathered at Freedom Park on Saturday to protest the alleged abduction and brutal killing of community dogs in the CV Raman Nagar area.

The protest, organised by the CV Raman Nagar Animal Squad, follows a series of disturbing incidents in which dogs were reportedly bound, placed in plastic bags, and left to suffocate. While three dogs were rescued, activists claim that over 20 others, including a paraplegic dog and one undergoing cancer treatment, are missing and presumed dead.

Key allegations

The protesters alleged that the dogs, which were sterilised and vaccinated under the BBMP's Animal Birth Control (ABC) programme, were illegally removed from their habitats. Evidence suggests that Solid Waste Management (SWM) contractors may have been used to transport and dispose of the animals.

Priya Chetty Rajagopal said, "Bengaluru is the only city in the country that has an established animal welfare network. More than 60 canine squads and animal aid groups cover the length and breadth of the city and have sterilised and vaccinated thousands of dogs every year over the last decade. We work in tandem with the BBMP and NGOs to take care of all our street animals."

"This is a direct violation of the Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023, and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act," said Mallika Ghosh of the CV Raman Nagar Animal Squad. "No institution is above the law of the land."

Speakers at the event, including volunteers from the Kumarapark Animal Squad, called for transparency from the DRDO and civic authorities regarding the whereabouts of the missing dogs.

"Where are our dogs? Who authorised this?" asked Prapthi, a volunteer. "Relocation is illegal and unscientific. We are demanding a full investigation and the prosecution of those responsible."

Residents of the DRDO township shared emotional accounts of losing dogs they had cared for over several years. Mathangi, a local resident, spoke of her search for 'Spot', a dog she had fed for seven years and who vanished in early March.

Peenya flyover to remain open; load test postponed

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) has officially announced the postponement of the scheduled closure of the Peenya Elevated Flyover (Sri Shivakumar Swamiji Flyover), which was originally planned for structural testing next week.

The flyover was slated to be closed to all vehicular movement from 5 am on April 13 to 11 am on April 17. However, on Saturday, BTP confirmed that the flyover will now remain open to regular traffic until further notice.

Sources said the delay is intended to facilitate Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Mandya on April 15, where he is scheduled to travel by road to inaugurate the Bhyravykya Mandira at Adichunchanagiri Mutt.

Peenya Police Station officials highlighted in a letter to NHAL that the period between April 11 and April 14 coincides with government holidays and school vacations. Closing the flyover would have forced roughly 4,000 to 5,000 vehicles per hour onto the surface roads at Jalahalli Cross, Dasarahalli and 8th Mile, risking massive congestion and law and order issues.

Traffic diversions in Banaswadi

BENGALURU, DHNS: The city traffic police have issued a traffic advisory for Dodda Banaswadi Main Road in view of a religious function scheduled from April 12 to 15. Traffic will be restricted on the stretch between Mukutamma Temple bus stop and Steel Factory bus stop. The restrictions will be in effect from 9 am on Sunday to 8 am on Wednesday.

Alternative routes

Ramamurthy Nagar to City: Turn right at Mukutamma Temple towards Horamavu Junction. Turn left onto 100 Feet Road, proceed to Vemanna Junction, and turn right to rejoin Banaswadi Main Road.

City to Ramamurthy Nagar/KR Puram: At Vemanna Junction, turn right near Steel Factory. Proceed via Bhuvanagiri Road to reach Ramamurthy Nagar Outer Ring Road.

Parking prohibited

Parking of all vehicles is strictly prohibited on both sides of Dodda Banaswadi Main Road from Mukutamma Temple Cross to Agis Gas Bunk.

Study raises concerns over transparency in Bengaluru spending

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

THE MONEY TRAIL

Where is the money coming from?
- Own source revenue from urban citizens
- State Finance Commission grants
- Assigned revenues
- State government schemes and grants
- Union Finance Commission grants
- Centrally sponsored schemes
- Public-private partnerships/ municipal bonds/ loans

Budget process
- Pre-budget consultation
- Budget estimation and consolidation
- Budget review
- Budget approval

Budget execution
- Work estimate preparation
- Administrative and technical approval
- Contracting
- Work execution and verification
- Billing
- Bill approval
- Payment processing

Source: Study by Janaagraha

Over Rs 38,000 crore in public spending in the city remains largely invisible to citizens. This was the highlight of a discussion during the third session of the Bengaluru Debates in Bengaluru on Friday. The discussion turned the spotlight on concerns about transparency and accountability in urban governance.

The quarterly dialogue series, convened by the Bangalore International Centre (BIC) and Janaagraha, focused on the topic "Can radical transparency transform Bengaluru?", specifically in improving governance outcomes. The discussion drew on a Janaagraha paper that attempts to map public spending in Bengaluru, noting the absence of any consolidated, publicly available account of how funds are allocated and used.

According to the study, an estimated Rs 38,000 crore, or over Rs 100 crore a day, was spent on Bengaluru in 2021-22. However, this figure had to be reconstructed from more than 70 documents across multiple agencies, underscoring the fragmented nature of financial disclosures.

The findings point to a structural imbalance: only about 20% of the expenditure is routed through the city government, while nearly 80% is handled by parastatal agencies such as the Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) and the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB). These agencies, on average, disclose only around a third of their financial information and are often not legally mandated to provide detailed public accounts, the study stated.

Participants in the discussion—Abdul Wajid, president of the District Congress Committee and former councillor; Padmanabha Reddy, former councillor; and Meera K, co-founder and trustee of the Oorvani Foundation—pointed out that the lack of accessible and comprehensive data makes it difficult to assess whether persistent civic issues, including traffic congestion, water shortages and flooding, stem from inadequate funding, poor planning or weak implementation. The session was moderated by Srikanth Viswanathan, chief executive officer, Janaagraha.

The discussion also underscored that transparency alone may not suffice. Strengthening local institutions such as ward committees and enabling citizen participation were identified as equally critical to improving accountability. "Today, we are seeing increasing centralisation of power and limited clarity on how large sums of public money are being spent, even as everyday civic issues persist. While radical transparency is essential, it must go hand in hand with strengthening local self-governance and ensuring citizens have both the information and the voice to hold institutions accountable," said Reddy, while Meera campaigned for data-driven transparency.

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Farmers reap rich REWARD with World Bank-assisted programme

Govt treats FPOs as biz entities, boosts growers' income

DH SPECIAL

ASHWIN B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

For many farmers in Karnataka, the biggest challenge isn't growing crops. It's marketing the produce. While the state has over 1,472 Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) promoted by various departments under various state and central schemes, many have struggled to move past simple registration to becoming profitable businesses.

The World Bank-assisted REWARD (Rejuvenating Watersheds for Agricultural Resilience through Innovative Development) programme is changing that. By treating FPOs as business entities rather than just groups, the government is cutting out middlemen and boosting farmer incomes.

"Formation is only the first chapter of the story, the real challenge is sustainability. Farmers are experts at cultivation but often lack the proficiency for grading, processing and navigating complex market dynamics. They often fall back on the old culture of selling to middlemen because they need immediate cash to repay input debts and lack adequate storage," said a senior officer in the department.

To bridge this gap, the State Watershed Development Department (WDD), acting as the nodal agency, onboarded Ernst & Young LLP as a Technical Support Agency (TSA) to handhold FPOs in achieving 25% increase in business turnover.

According to departmental data, several FPOs have seen income surges of 200% to 300%. In Belagavi, for instance, where dairy farming is prominent alongside sugarcane and soybean cultivation, farmers struggled with preservation of available waste green fodder over months. The REWARD programme stepped in to facilitate the green fodder silage (succulent green fodder). By providing the necessary machinery and technical know-how, the department helped the FPO turn a crop residue product into a high-value commodity, ensuring year-round fodder for cattle and a new revenue stream for the organisation. The core of the transformation is collectivisation. Instead of individual farmers selling ungraded onions or maize at the mercy of a trader's price, FPOs now aggregate, grade, and sell in bulk.

"If the local market price is Rs 100/kg, a professionalised FPO can find a buyer at Rs 110/kg through better grading and direct linkage. That extra Rs 10 goes directly back to the farmer members," department officials explained.

Watershed Development Department Commissioner Upendra Pratap Singh said that the department is strengthening the FPO ecosystem. FPOs are receiving support under the REWARD, the WDC 2.0 programme, the AMRUTH FPO scheme and the 10,000 FPO scheme. A recent FPO Mela where several FPOs participated and facilitated 65 buyer-seller meetings, resulting in Letters of Intent (LoIs) with a deal value of Rs 57.42 crore.

Maize aggregation for forward linkage by Spoorti Raitha FPO, Savanur, Haveri.

Track record

Market linkages: 14 FPOs facilitated 334 transactions, trading over 5,866 tonnes of produce, generating a turnover of Rs 21.09 crores.
Strategic planning: 17 business plans were approved, with the government providing subsidies to help generate business plans for FPOs and facilitating bank linkage to avail a loan of up to 75% for machinery and value-addition units.
Better credit: The programme helped bank linkage to avail a loan for 19 FPOs from banks and even replaced board members with low credit scores to make the organisations more bankable.

FPOs are the future: Minister

Minister for Agriculture N Chaluvarayaswamy told DH that a state-level FPO cooperative society exists to provide leadership and comprehensive support to FPOs across the state."FPOs are the future of the agricultural sector in both the country and the state," he said. "The future lies in transforming farmers into agripreneurs."

Shobha urges all political parties to support Women's Reservation Bill

BENGALURU, DHNS

Hailing Prime Minister Narendra Modi for aggressively advocating for the Women's Reservation Bill, aimed at reserving 33% of seats in state legislatures and the Parliament for women, Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje on Saturday welcomed the Centre's decision to convene a special session of the Parliament from April 16 to 18 to deliberate on the legislation.

"Our PM has consistently focussed on the social, educational and economic empowerment of women, and is now pushing for their increased participation in the legislative decision-making process," Shobha told journalists in Bengaluru.

Shobha Karandlaje

It was a 'moment of joy' for women, said Shobha, pointing out that women had been demanding reservation in legislative bodies for the past few decades. Calling on all political parties to support the bill, she also urged them to identify capable women leaders from various fields, who she said should be sent to Parliament.

Panchayats led by women had performed impressively on markers of governance during her tenure as Karnataka Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, reminisced Shobha. "It's not just education, but commitment and sentiment that drive performance," she said.

Sushma Swaraj, Smriti Irani and Nirmala Sitharaman, to name a few, had been entrusted the responsibility of key portfolios under BJP-led central governments, said Shobha. Legislative empowerment is but the next step in the journey, said the Union Minister, who pointed to various initiatives such as Mudra loans, self-help groups, 'Lakhpati Didi' and 'Drone Didi' that had been rolled out with the aim of uplifting women. "Women have a voice and we need to make it a powerful one," she added.

Responding to Congress's concerns about the special session being convened during elections, Shobha said, "There are institutions to address concerns about the Model Code of Conduct. Congress is seeing everything through a tinted lens. Mallikarjun Kharge should clarify whether he opposes the bill or has concerns only about the timing."

Notwithstanding the fact that Indira Gandhi served as the country's PM, and Sonia Gandhi served as the president of the Congress, the party was shedding crocodile tears over women's reservation, charged Shobha. "Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is the only woman who matters for the Congress, which is not interested in sending other women to Parliament. The Congress should change this mindset," said Shobha.

President of the BJP's Karnataka State Mahila Morcha C Manjula said that the party would launch a 10-day-long women's outreach campaign across the state starting Sunday. "Led by Shobha, we will launch a signature campaign in KR Puram on Sunday. This will be a state-wide campaign aimed at garnering support for the bill," said Manjula.

Yuvotsava job fair on April 20

BENGALURU, DHNS: Former BJP deputy chief minister and MLA C N Ashwath Narayan on Saturday said that Yuvotsava – Udyoga Mela 2026, a job fair with the theme 'Employment for All' on April 20, will be held to mark Basava Jayanti.

He said over 100 companies from IT, banking, healthcare and service sectors are offering more than 5,000 job opportunities in the job fair organised in association with Bharat Career Connect. The job fair will be held at the SHVNM Government Women's PU College, Malleswaram, from 8.30 am to 4.30 pm.

Five cows charred to death in DJ Halli fire, man held

BENGALURU, DHNS: DJ Halli police on Friday arrested a 49-year-old man for allegedly causing a fire that left five cows charred to death and destroyed multiple properties.

The accused has been identified as Mohammed Imran, 49, a resident of Shyampura in KG Halli. He had earlier worked in a workshop and had quit the job recently. He has been living alone, as his wife and children had separated from him several years ago.

Police said the incident occurred in DJ Halli in the early hours of April 7. The massive fire broke out after Imran allegedly set ablaze a heap of garbage near a cattle shed and a plywood sheet shop. The flames spread rapidly, engulfing the shed and nearby establishments. Five cows sleeping in the shed were charred to death, while two plywood shops, a goods vehicle and four two-wheelers were gutted in the fire.

Based on credible inputs and CCTV footage, police traced Imran. During interrogation, he reportedly admitted that he was in the habit of setting fire to garbage and had done so negligently at the spot, leading to the mishap.

The total loss in the incident is estimated at Rs 15.2 lakh, police added.

Bengaluru-Mumbai Vande Bharat sleeper train soon

Duration of journey estimated to be around 17-18 hours

BENGALURU, DHNS

A Vande Bharat sleeper train that will operate between Bengaluru and Mumbai has been approved, according to Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw. The train will run between KSR Bengaluru and CSMT Station in Mumbai.

The Union Minister confirmed as much in a letter to Bangalore Central MP, P C Mohan, on April 5.

Mohan told *DH* that modalities related to travel time, route and frequency were still being worked out. "The train service will start soon," he said.

Ashutosh Kumar Singh, Divisional Railway Manager, Bengaluru, said the plan was to launch a train service that reduced the travel time between the two cities to 17-18 hours.

Asked about the route that the train would take, he said details were still being fine-tuned but pointed out that it would be faster to route it via Kalaburagi than via Hubballi.

The Kalaburagi route, through which the existing Udyan Express operates, spans 1,136 km. It is fully electrified but does not have double tracks all along. However, it serves only a few districts in Karnataka.

While the Hubballi route is longer at 1,215 km and is also fully electrified, it passes through the Karnataka hinterland, covering more than half-a-dozen districts. Public representatives from Karnataka and railway enthusiasts have pushed for this route.

In December 2025, the Railway Board approved a bi-weekly train between the two cities with 17 LHB coaches and a travel time of over 24 hours. The proposal was put on hold following public criticism, and no public notification was issued.

The railways then decided to introduce a premium train instead. While a Duronto Express was considered initially, discussions eventually focused on the Vande Bharat sleeper, railway officials said.

TP Lokesh of the Karnataka Railway Vedike complained that the fares for the Vande Bharat sleeper train would be very high, compared to air ticket prices.

"A 3-AC seat will likely cost Rs 3,000. How many people can afford that? We wanted a superfast train with regular fares," he added.

Cong opposing women's quota not new: Ashwath Narayan

BENGALURU, DHNS: Former deputy chief minister and Malleswaram MLA Dr C N Ashwath Narayan on Saturday slammed the Congress, saying it had always been against women's reservation.

Speaking to reporters, Narayan said Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's opposition to the special session of parliament on women's reservation when state Assembly elections were on had no basis as Prime Minister Narendra Modi had already brought the Women's Reservation Act in 2023 and it was not being hurried.

"The special session is to ensure that reservation is implemented in the 2029 Lok Sabha elections, with all parties taking part in the discussions. It will bring in necessary amendments to help implement the women's quota," he said.

"Kharge raises objection to everything, loses his cool, makes hateful remarks against BJP, RSS and people of Gujarat. I fail to understand how a man with an outstanding career, who leads a party that is a over a 100 years old, is doing this," said Narayan.

Taking a dig at the Congress' claim that it would win both Assembly seats in bylections, the BJP leader said, "That party is a divided and a broken house. They have no confidence of retaining two seats they had previously won. So the entire government, including the chief minister, campaigned in the bypolls. It was not by-election, but Congress trying to buy the election".

The bypoll is yet another opportunity for the different factions in the state Congress to settle scores amid an ongoing power tussle, he said. "It is a sinking ship. Also, legislators lobbying for Cabinet berths will change nothing for the people of the state," Narayan said.

PULL OF DEVOTION

Devotees take part in the annual car festival (Rathotsava) at the Polali Rajarajeshwari temple in Bantwal taluk of Dakshina Kannada district on Saturday. DH PHOTO/FAKRUDDIN H

GBA: Teachers exempted from census work

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) on Friday issued an order exempting teachers of government schools and lecturers of government PU colleges from census work. Earlier, officers/staff of Group B and Group C of the Department of School Education and Literacy (DSEL) were assigned to the Census work. The Principal Secretary of the DSEL had requested the Chief Commissioner of GBA to exempt teachers and lecturers assigned to re-evaluation and other examination activities, and officers/employees of the Karnataka School Examination and Assessment Board, from the Census work. Considering the request, the Chief Commissioner of GBA has issued an order.

Data protection body sets up assn to aid compliance with law

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Federation of Data Protection Professionals in India (FDPPI) on Saturday announced the launch of its new division, the Association of Independent Data Auditors of India, aimed at equipping data auditors with the necessary skills and building capacity within India's data protection ecosystem.

The Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP Act) was passed in 2023, and rules have since been framed. Under the law, which will come into effect in May 2027, companies will be required to appoint independent data auditors. However, the role and responsibilities of these auditors remain unclear. According to industry observers, this uncertainty could slow implementation and lead to weak compliance, even as firms are expected to strengthen data governance practices, potentially increasing the risk of data breaches and regulatory penalties.

Speaking at the event, FDPPI chairman Vijayashankar Naavi said the effort is focused on preparing for what lies ahead. "We need to create a credible ecosystem of independent data auditors before enforcement gathers pace," he said. Any professional, including freshers, can join the community as probationary independent data auditors, he added. "They can learn, associate with others and grow into future independent data auditors."

Naavi further emphasised that professionals must take the lead over bureaucrats in the effective implementation of auditing frameworks, as they are better equipped to handle data protection. To this end, FDPPI is working towards creating a convergence platform for data auditors, information security auditors and privacy auditors. "AIDAI aims to bring together data audit seekers and providers," he said. FDPPI has also developed a framework to provide a jurisprudential interpretation of the DPDP Act, enabling data fiduciaries to work towards "compliance by design".

CENTRAL RAILWAY
SOLAPUR DIVISION
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Divisional Store Office Central Railway, Solapur for and on Behalf of President of India invites online e-tenders on Railway's e-procurement website **www.ireps.gov.in** from the capable, reputed firms / Contractors for the following works. **Tender No: SUR / Sr DMM / T No.: 96265133, Date: 10.04.2026. Description**: Supply, installation and commissioning of IOT based Real time water level monitoring unit in set of 155 Nos of Coaches with over Head water tank, as per RDSO specification: No IS/ RDSOCG/ 0002:2025 with corrigendum-01 or as per latest specification specified by railway. **Quantity**: 155 Set. **Earnest Money (INR)**: ₹ 1,14,900/-. **Date & Time of Closing of Tender on www.ireps.gov.in**: 22.04.2026 after 11:30 hrs. The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website frequently before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender. Website: **www.ireps.gov.in**

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SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
Annexure-A
WITHDRAWAL OF APPLICATION NOTIFICATION NO. 565/ATVM Facilitator/04/2026 NOTIFIED FOR HOSUR STATION.
In view of Model Code of conduct, the ATVM facilitator invited vide notification No. B/C.565/ATVM Facilitator/04/2026 dated 06.04.2026 for **Hosur Station is withdrawn** with immediate effect.
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CENTRAL RAILWAY
SOLAPUR DIVISION
ELECTRICAL WORK

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Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (G),
AK/Sur-26 Central Railway, Solapur
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SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE NO. CN/03/2026 DATE : 08/04/2026
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tender through IREPS only for supply of following items: **Tender Closing Time: 10:30 Hrs.**

Sl.	Tender No.	Description in Brief	Tender Due on
1	56261093	PVC Insulated, Armoured, Unscreened, Underground Railway Signalling Cable as per RDSO Spec. IRS : S:63/2014 Rev.4.0 or latest; Size : 2 Core x 2.5 Sq.mm. **Qty** : 487 Kms.	30.04.2026

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॥ कार्यालय, जिला परिषद्, दुमका ॥
E-mail- z.pdumka2014@gmail.com

अति अल्पकालीन ई0–निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या– ZP-DUM-03/2026/Re-02

1. कार्य का नाम :– जिला परिषदों को विभिन्न भवनों, परिसम्पत्तियों का निर्माण, मरम्मती एवं नवीकरण मद अन्तर्गत में प्राप्त आवंटन से ली जानेवाली योजनाओं की निविदा सूची।

क्र0	कार्य का नाम	प्रा0 राशि	अग्रधन की राशि	परिमाण विपत्र का मूल्य	कार्य समाप्ति की अवधि	अभ्युक्ति
1	नेशनल स्कूल के सामने जिला परिषद् की जमीन पर विशाल मार्केट कॉम्पलेक्स का निर्माण।	4,99,00,000.00	9,98,000.00	10000.00	18 माह	

2.	वेबसाइट में निविदा प्रकाशन की तिथि	दिनांक :– 18.04.2026
3.	ई–निविदा प्राप्ति की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	दिनांक :– 27.04.2026 (अपराह्न 3:00 बजे तक)।
4.	निविदा खुलने की तिथि एवं समय	दिनांक :– 29.04.2026 (समय 2:00 बजे अपराह्न)
5.	निविदा खोलने का स्थान	जिला परिषद् कार्यालय, दुमका।
6.	निविदा आमंत्रित करने वाले पदाधिकारी का नाम एवं पता	श्री रबीन कुमार मंडल, जिला अभियंता, जिला परिषद् दुमका।
7.	ई–निविदा प्रकोष्ठ का मोबाईल नंबर	9308098056
8.	निविदा शुल्क एवं अग्रधन की राशि केवल ऑन–लाईन मोड द्वारा ही स्वीकार्य होगा।	
9.	निविदा शुल्क एवं अग्रधन की राशि का ई0–भुगतान जिस खाता से किया जायेगा, उसी खाते में अग्रधन की राशि वापस होगी। अगर खाता को बंद कर दिया जाता है तो सारी जवाबदेही आपकी होगी।	

नोट :– उक्त निविदा में जिला परिषद, दुमका के निबंधित संवेदक ही भाग ले सकते हैं।
निविदा द्वि–लिफाफा पद्धति के माध्यम से किया जायेगा।
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SBD के सभी शर्त इस ई0–निविदा में लागू रहेंगे।
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PR 377257 District(26-27).D

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PROFORMA 10-01
INDIAN RAILWAYS
PUBLIC NOTIFICATION
Notice is hereby given to all users of Railway lines and premises situated on the completed section of the under noted section of the South Western Railway, that 25000 Volts, 50 Hz AC, overhead traction wires will be energized on or after the date specified against the section. On and from the same date, the overhead traction line shall be treated as **LIVE** at all times and no unauthorized person shall approach or work in the proximity of the said overhead line **Marikuppam station** to **Dravidian university**.

Sl. No.	Section	Chainage in KM		Probable date of Energization
1	Marikuppam to Dravidian university phase-I	15/823.4	5/720	30.05.2026

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in
Place: Bengaluru
Date: 01.04.2026
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Hippopotamus Hamsini has a miscarriage

SHIVAMOGGA, DHNS: Hippopotamus Hamsini, which allegedly caused the death of trainee veterinarian Sameeksha Reddy in the zoo-cum-safari at Tyavarekoppa near here last month, had a miscarriage on Saturday.

Normally, hippopotamuses give birth after 250 days of pregnancy. The eight-year-old Hamsini was pregnant for 265 days.

Contract veterinary officer Murali Manohar was relieved of his service recently. So, Hamsini was under the care of a veterinarian from Bannerghatta Zoo.

Sameeksha had gone to the enclosure of Hamsini to examine her temperature on the night of March 19, as she was not eating food. At that time, the hippopotamus had attacked her. She was seriously injured and died the next day at a private hospital in Shivamogga.

Abdul Jabbar quits Cong post as rift among party's Muslim leaders escalates

What's the proof?: MLC on allegations of supporting SDPI nominee

BENGALURU, DHNS

Lawmaker K Abdul Jabbar has resigned as chairperson of the Karnataka Congress' minorities department, deepening discord among Muslim leaders over allegations that some of them worked against the party in the Davangere South bypoll.

Jabbar, an MLC, told reporters that he sent his resignation to Deputy Chief Minister and Karnataka Congress president D K Shivakumar on Saturday afternoon.

However, the resignation letter was dated April 3, almost a week before polling in Davangere South where some Muslim leaders, including Jabbar, have been accused of conspiring to defeat Congress.

On Friday, Government Chief Whip Saleem Ahmed and Shivajinagar MLA Rizwan Arshad told a news conference that senior Muslim leaders in the party attempted to sabotage the Congress' Davangere South bypoll effort. They did not take names, but all fingers pointed to Jabbar, Housing Minister B Z Zameer Ahmed Khan and Chief Minister's Political Secretary Naseer Ahmed.

In his resignation letter, Jabbar said he was stepping down with "a heavy sense of sadness" over the state-of-affairs concerning Muslims and their leaders in Congress.

K ABDUL JABBAR
Congress MLC

"The allegation is that we supported the SDPI and independent candidate. What's the proof? We've heard many times that Rizwan Arshad, after being denied the ticket in Mysuru, supported SDPI against Tanveer Sait. But we didn't believe it.

He pointed to "disrespectful" statements made against Zameer, which he said hurt Muslim Congress workers. Speaking to reporters later, Jabber described Zameer as "the most popular Muslim leader in Congress after Aziz Sait and Jaffer Sharief."

'Not consulted'

Next, Jabbar lamented that he and his minorities department were not asked for their inputs during the Davangere South bypoll. Third, Jabbar claimed that a few Muslims leaders were being sidelined.

Jabbar said he dispatched his resignation to Shivakumar after watching, and being hurt by, Friday's press conference by Saleem and Rizwan. "It was a shock to see the Congress office being used as a platform to attack the party's minority leaders," he said.

"The allegation is that we supported the SDPI and independent candidate. What's the proof? We've heard many times that Rizwan Arshad, after being denied the ticket in Mysuru, supported SDPI against Tanveer Sait. But we didn't believe it," Jabbar said.

Neutral in poll?

Jabbar, who was a ticket aspirant himself, stopped short of saying that he became neutral at one point in time during electioneering. "I had ill health. Also, I wasn't invited for canvassing by the candidate, his mother or father," he said.

"Minority voters and minority office-bearers are the backbone of our great Congress party," Jabbar wrote in his resignation letter, "and (they) certainly deserve better than this."

Teacher arrested in POCSO case, suspended

NAYAKANAHATTI (CHITRADURGA DISTRICT): A teacher was arrested and remanded in judicial custody on Saturday following allegations of sexual assault and a forced abortion involving a minor student.

The accused has been identified as H O Rajanna, a teacher at a Higher Primary School in Challakere taluk's Kasaba Hobli.

The case came to light after the District Child Protection Officer filed a POCSO complaint with the Talaku police on Friday, against Rajanna and Dr Shankara Lakshmi, a physician at a private nursing home in Challakere, who allegedly helped him with the abortion.

In an attempt to evade the legal consequences, Rajanna attempted suicide by consuming poison on Thursday and was treated at a hospital in Davangere. However, the police successfully apprehended him in Chitradurga on Saturday.

Meanwhile, deputy director of public instruction (DDPI) Manjunath visited the school and conducted a preliminary inspection.

Block Education Officer K S Suresh confirmed that Rajanna has been placed under immediate suspension.

Simultaneously, a team, including District Health Officer Renu Prasad, Tahsildar Rehan Pasha, and Taluk Health Officer N Kashi, inspected the private nursing home.

The team found significant discrepancies in the hospital's medical records and has filed a formal report on these lapses.

While the teacher remains in custody, Dr Shankara Lakshmi has reportedly gone missing since the registration of the case.

The fabrication work of the last crest gate of the Tungabhadra (TB) dam is underway in Hosapete. TB Board officials are hopeful of fixing all 33 new gates by April-end. DH PHOTO

26 of 33 crest gates installed at TB dam, remaining to be fixed by month-end

HOSAPETE (VIJAYANAGAR DISTRICT), DHNS: The work to replace the old and obsolete crest gates of Tungabhadra reservoir has gathered pace. As on April 11, 26 new crest gates have been installed while the work to fix three more gates is underway, according to Tungabhadra Board officials.

The TB Board sources said, the old gates have been completely removed. The fabrication of one gate is going on in Hosapete. By the end of this month, the remaining seven crest gates will be fixed, the sources added.

After the gate number 19 gave in in August 2024, the dam authorities decided to replace all 33 old crest gates with new ones to manage the spillway system.

SSLC: Suggestions, objections invited for 3rd language grade system

BENGALURU, DHNS

The government has issued a draft notification inviting objections, within seven days, about its decision to award grades for the Third Language subject in the SSLC examination.

From this year's SSLC examination, the marks obtained in Third Language subjects such as Hindi, Urdu and Kannada as well as the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), will not be considered for the overall results.

Any objections or suggestions regarding this draft notification may be submitted to the Additional Chief Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy, Room No. 663, 6th Floor, 2nd Gate, Multi-Storey Building, Dr B R Ambedkar Veedhi, Bengaluru–560001.

The government has stated in the draft notification that objections or suggestions received before the deadline will be duly considered.

Max 525 marks

The SSLC examination is conducted for a maximum of 625 marks so far, but hereafter it will be conducted for a maximum of 525 marks, as already announced by School Education and Literacy Minister Madhu Bangarappa.

Accordingly, in the draft notification, Grades A, B, and C will be awarded based on the marks obtained in Third Language and NSQF subjects.

Those scoring between 80% and 100% will be awarded Grade A, those who score between 50% and 79% would get Grade B, and the students who obtain up to 49% would be awarded Grade C. Though the minister had earlier mentioned four grades, it has now been decided to award only three.

Pass/fail status

The grades for Third Language and NSQF will be mentioned in the marks card as additional subjects and will not be considered for pass/fail status.

To be declared as passed, candidates must secure at least 33% marks in both the internal assessment and the external examination combined.

Out of the total 525 marks, a minimum of 173 marks must be obtained, along with at least 30% marks in each subject individually.

CAUTIOUS CONVEYANCE

A massive 120-tonne radiation shield, essential for Units 5 and 6 of the Kaiga Nuclear Power Plant, has been parked near Arga village in Karwar taluk in Uttara Kannada district, after a 60-day journey from Surat, Gujarat. Manufactured by Larsen & Toubro, the oversized equipment was transported using a specially designed multi-axle vehicle. Its width of over 30 feet required careful handling through cities and highways. The next challenge lies in moving it through the narrow roads beyond Karwar, where permissions, road adjustments, and infrastructure changes are needed to ensure safe passage to its final destination at Kaiga. DH PHOTO

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UNFETTERED URGE Weak laws embolden 'irresponsible' explorers, say experts

A wild goose chase for forest dept to end trekkers' 'jungle raj'

PAVAN KUMAR H
HUBBALLI, DHNS:

The official website of the Karnataka Eco-Tourism Development Board (KEDB) -- aranyavihaara.karnataka.gov.in - has disabled the slot booking option for trekking routes indefinitely due to the ongoing fire season.

Yet, hundreds of adventure seekers have been trespassing into forest terrains, not only violating rules, but also threatening the ecology.

The board has identified 38 trekking routes in Karnataka. However, regular trekkers and trekking camp organisers say there are over 175 trekking spots in and around forest areas, most of which are unmanned.

Recently, 10 youths from Dharwad district ventured into restricted areas of the Khanapur forests to reach Vajrapoha waterfalls. In videos shared on social media, the youths are seen ignoring warning banners of the forest department.

One of them is heard claiming to be related to an elected representative, suggesting that action against them would not be possible.

Based on the video, the department took all 10 youths into custody. However, they were released with a warning and station bail as the offence is non-cognizable, carrying a maximum punishment of a fine of Rs 500 or six months' imprisonment.

"We wanted to teach them a strict lesson as they had knowingly violated the rules. But most of the time, we are helpless as the law is weak," said a senior forest department officer in Belagavi.

The videos also show the youths swimming in deep waters in the waterfall and some consuming alcohol and smoking.

"At this time of the year, the forest floor is covered with dry leaves and any fire could have caused large-scale destruction in this elephant corridor," the officer said.

This is not the first such incident in the Khanapur forests. Every year, four to five cases of trespassing are reported in the area. One reason for such violations is the lack of forest watchers or guards. The stretch between Khanapur and Chorla Ghat has several minor waterfalls, attracting visitors who venture into protected areas. Monitoring all such locations is very difficult.

The situation is no different in Kodagu, Chikkamagaluru, Uttara Kannada, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts, where people enter forest areas to create social media content or to "discover hidden gems".

Experts say irresponsible behaviour by trekkers poses risks not only to their own safety, but also to forest biodiversity.

The recent incident of a Kerala IT professional, G S Sharanya, going missing in the forests of Kodagu, has also raised concerns over tour operators taking large groups into the woods.

The group had taken permission to trek Tadiandamol hill. However, Sharanya separated from the group. She was rescued safely later.

Following this, Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre ordered for putting a standard operating procedure in place, creating an app to help track tekkers and to provide group insurance for trekkers. Experts doubt if these measures can prevent future such incidents.

The Karnataka Eco-Tourism Development Board has identified 38 trekking routes in the state. However, regular trekkers and trekking camp organisers say there are over 175 trekking spots in and around forest areas, most of which are unmanned. DH FILE PHOTO

Rakhi Gowda, a Bengaluru-based trekker, said authorities cannot fully prevent such trespassing.

"The forest and tourism departments lack the manpower to monitor all areas. Instead, the government should allow regulated access with local guides. This can also generate employment for village residents," he said, adding that the entry fees collected could help improve facilities.

Environment activist Girish D V from Chikkamagaluru criticized the state's policy.

"Without scientific studies on carrying capacity, we are allowing trekking in wilderness areas. Unregulated organisations are conducting trekking camps without permission. What action is being taken against them," he asked.

He blamed irresponsible tourists for a recent fire at Kerekatte, Manikya Betta and nearby areas, which destroyed 18 acres of shola vegetation in Kudremukh National Park.

Following the incident, the department suspended trekking on major routes vulnerable to fire.

Ravi Shankar H, CEO of KEDB, said social media influencers were contributing to the problem.

"Many people unfamiliar with trekking routes are influenced by such videos and venture into unsafe areas, causing harm to themselves and the forest," he said.

Ravi Shankar said that while carrying capacity had been assessed for 38 routes and naturalists deployed, managing large crowds remained a challenge.

"A naturalist can handle 10–15 people, but if 200 arrive at once, it becomes difficult. Irresponsible trekkers also litter, affecting wildlife behaviour," he said. Ravi emphasised the need for a stronger policy to act against violators.

Youth Cong leader stabbed to death in Dharwad; 3 detained

DHARWAD, DHNS

Fairoz Pathan

A youth Congress leader was brutally murdered inside his residence in Dharwad late Friday night, sending shockwaves across the city.

The deceased has been identified as Fairoz Khan Pathan (34). According to police, four persons allegedly entered his house in Hashmi Nagar, leading to a heated altercation.

The situation quickly escalated when the attackers dragged Fairoz out of the house, where one of them stabbed him. In an attempt to escape, he ran back inside, but the assailants chased him and assaulted him with lethal weapons, inflicting severe injuries in his head and back. He died on the spot.

Family members immediately alerted the police. Upon arrival, officers found Fairoz lying in a pool of blood. He was rushed to the district hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead.

As news of the incident spread, a large number of supporters gathered outside the Sub-Urban Police Station, demanding swift action and strict punishment for the accused.

Hubballi-Dharwad Police Commissioner N Shashikumar visited the spot and intervened to pacify the protesters.

Speaking to the media on Saturday, the Commissioner said that based on CCTV footage, three suspects have been taken into custody. The prime accused remains absconding, and a special team has been formed to track down all those involved in the crime.

Preliminary investigation suggests that the murder was the result of an old enmity, police added.

Fee structure for 2026-27

Type of quota	2026-27 (Rs)	2025-26 (Rs)
Government quota seats in type-1 private colleges	87,935	81,800
Government quota seats in type-2 private colleges	97,825	91,000
Government quota in COMED-K type-1 colleges	2,15,000	2,00,000
Government quota seats in COMED-K type-2 colleges	3,02,182	2,81,100
Government, aided and VTU constituent colleges	Not decided	44,200
UVCE	Not decided	49,600

Fee for govt quota engg seats to be hiked by 7.5%

BENGALURU, DHNS

The annual fee for undergraduate engineering courses in the state is set to go up by 7.5% from the coming academic year.

A decision to this effect was taken at a meeting chaired by Minister for Higher Education Dr M C Sudhakar, wherein representatives of private engineering colleges were in attendance. Although they insisted on a 10-15% hike in the fee, the minister prevailed on them to settle for raising the fee by 7.5%. The fee hike will be effective for those seats allotted from the government's quota.

This is the second consecutive year that the fee for the undergraduate engineering course has been hiked by 7.5%, although it was increased by only 5% for seats at government colleges. However, no decision has been taken on hiking the fee for government colleges for the coming academic year.

Consequently, the fee for KCET seats at Type-1 engineering colleges is set to rise from Rs 81,000 to Rs 87,935, while it will increase from Rs 91,000 to Rs 97,825 at Type-2 colleges. The fee is exclusive of the charges levied for university registration and processing.

The university fee has been fixed at Rs 10,610. Meanwhile, there has been no change in the cap on additional fees that colleges can charge – Rs 20,000.

Private colleges reportedly pressed for a hike in the fees, citing rising costs.

Centre hikes duty on diesel...

Diesel, from Page 3

Last month, the Narendra Modi government slashed special excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 10 per litre and imposed duty on exports.

Though India is heavily dependent on imports to meet its fuel requirements, it is also a major exporter of refined petroleum products, especially diesel and turbine fuel.

Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) is India's leading exporter of refined petroleum products. Bangladesh, Singapore, the UAE and African countries are among the major importers of refined petroleum products from India.

The so-called 'windfall' tax was first introduced by India in July 2022 to tax companies on their "supernormal" profits on exports of petroleum products. It was scrapped in December 2024 following the decline in crude oil prices and was reintroduced at the end of last month.

Defending the imposition of taxes on exports of diesel and ATF last month, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said that the move was aimed to "ensure adequate availability of these products for domestic consumption".

US, Iran hold face-to-face peace talks..

Iran, From Page 3

Experts however said Iran's delegation showed it was serious about leaving Pakistan with a deal. "The size, seniority, and breadth of the Iranian delegation... signal both Tehran's sincerity in these negotiations and its expectations and confidence," said Trita Parsi, executive vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.

Sharif, whose country's down-to-the-wire mediation got both sides to the negotiating table, said the talks would not be easy. "An even more difficult stage lies ahead," he said, referring to efforts to end fighting. "This is that stage which, in English, is called the equivalent of 'make or break.'" Security was tight in the Pakistani capital on Saturday, Pakistan has formulated a team of experts to facilitate the two sides in negotiations on navigation, nuclear and other key matters.

Give us a chance at power in municipal polls: HDK to B'lureans

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Deve Gowda-led JD(S) on Saturday urged the people of Bengaluru for a chance in power by supporting it in the impending elections to the five municipal corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA).

Addressing the gathering during the party's convention here ahead of GBA elections, Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy appealed to the people to give JD(S) a clear mandate.

"I urge the people of Bengaluru and Karnataka to give a clear mandate to JD(S) once and help it restore administrative integrity. In my earlier tenures as chief minister, I was constrained by coalition compulsions. I request people for an opportunity to govern with full authority and accountability," he appealed.

Sharing details about the measures taken by Deve Gowda for the development of Bengaluru, Kumaraswamy said, "Deve Gowda was the one who laid the foundation for the city becoming a technology hub. Key initiatives like introduction of Metrorail were taken during my tenure was chief minister."

He mentioned that even Cauvery water supply to Bengaluru was conceptualised by Deve Gowda.

"People should not forget these contributions of Deve Gowda to Bengaluru," the former CM said.

Kumaraswamy accused the Congress government in the state of not allowing him to revive Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Limited.

"I am trying to revamp HMT. Even for that, the state government is not cooperating," he said.

He accused the Congress of demolishing houses of the oppressed classes in Kogilu and Thanisandra areas and later using the situation for political gain.

"We are in alliance with the BJP and I have got a good opportunity to serve the nation under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. We are always committed to the alliance. The discussions regarding the alliance will happen at my level. None should speak about it on the streets. Securing my party workers and safeguarding my party is my responsibility".

Former prime minister and JD(S) supremo H D Deve Gowda, Union minister H D Kumaraswamy and JD(S) youth wing state president Nikhil Kumaraswamy at a party's convention in Bengaluru on Saturday. DH PHOTO/RANJU P

Kumaraswamy says he planned tunnel road 15 yrs ago

Criticising the Congress government's tunnel road project, Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy said that the tunnel road was planned 15 years ago during his first tenure as chief minister.

"The Congress is talking about a tunnel road now. In fact, I had planned a tunnel road for the city and held talks with a Korean company. The plan was to construct a tunnel road from Minsk Square to Hebbal flyover." Even the decision for the construction of a peripheral ring road at a cost of Rs 3,000 crore was taken by him, Kumaraswamy claimed. Successive governments failed to complete the projects, he said.

Learn governance from Modi: Gowda to Siddu

Former PM and JD(S) supremo H D Deve Gowda attacked the Congress government, calling it the worst government the state had ever seen.

"Chief Minister Siddaramaiah must learn governance from Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

Accusing Siddaramaiah of being responsible for toppling the Kumaraswamy-led JD(S)-Congress coalition government, he said, "Modi invited us to join him, and I agreed, after we faced repeated setbacks being with the Congress. Today, Kumaraswamy has been allowed to serve as union minister".

'Monumental fraud': HC orders...

HC orders, from Page 3

In 2000, an application was submitted by P Satish Pai with specific survey numbers, requesting the government to acquire lands to establish "Unicare Tourist Centre" comprising a resort, five-star hotel, amusement park, etc. Besides Satish Pai, other promoters of the firm were shown as Dr Ramdas Pai, Syed Mohammed Salahuddin and P Dayananda Pai. The preliminary and the final notifications were issued by the KIADB in 2002 and 2004, respectively.

The division bench noted none of the promoters, named in the application by Satish Pai in 2000, was found to be associated with the entity when it got incorporated in 2011. At the time of incorporation, the share capital of the entity was Rs one lakh and the income shown as 'zero'. With no development for the next 12 years, on March 7, 2023, the state-level Single Window Clearance Committee considered the Lakeview Tourism Corporation as a partnership firm of two real estate developers and approved change of land use for an integrated township with development of commercial office spaces, Information Technology Park, etc.

The landowners filed an appeal after their petitions were dismissed by a single bench of the high court. The division bench noted that it was a fraud on statute to deprive the landowners of their valuable property for pittance at the behest of a non-existent entity.

"A non-existent entity, which promised to commence its operation with effect from December 31, 2001, providing employment to 2,000 persons had a net worth of Rs 8,60,686 in the financial year 2022-23. The director's report for the financial year 2022-23 would also suggest that the company is still in the process of identifying viable business opportunities and starting its principal business operations. The company is hopeful of growth in the coming years. The cash and bank balance as on March 31, 2022, was only Rs 45,963 and by the same date, the profit was Rs 66,715," the division bench noted.

The bench also negated the submissions made on behalf of the entity that the high court had upheld the land acquisition in the earlier rounds of litigation. The bench said that even where a competent court has rendered a final decision, fraud discovered later can invalidate that decision and permit recall or correction.

"The decision for acquiring the land for the respondent entity was taken by an authority in the state. We cannot expect an impartial and independent investigation at the hands of the state agencies when the state instrumentally itself was involved in committing the monumental fraud as pointed out above. Therefore, it is required that the matter should be investigated by an independent agency for proper, impartial and unbiased investigation. Hence, we deem it appropriate to entrust the investigation to the CBI," the bench said.

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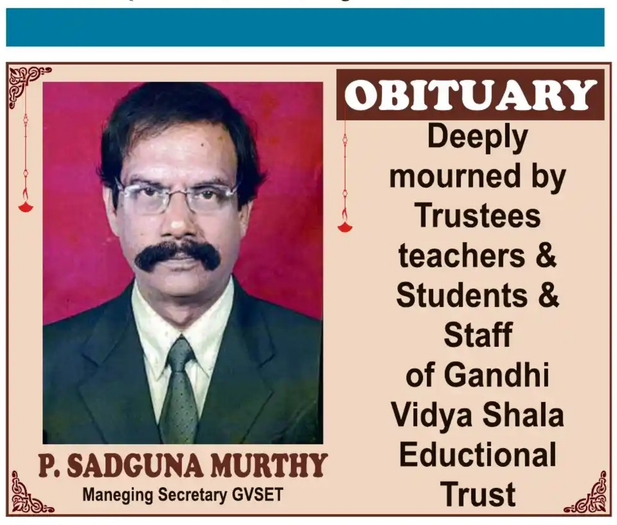
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Postal power for Jan Aushadhi: Minister backs MP's idea

BENGALURU, DHNS: The department of pharmaceuticals has been asked to explore a collaboration with India Post on doorstep delivery of medicines through the Jan Aushadhi Kendras, Union Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia has informed Rajya Sabha BJP member Lahar Singh Siroya.

The MP had proposed the idea first in Parliament, on how the network of the department of posts can be used to expand the infrastructure of Jan Aushadhi Kendras.

Lahar Singh Siroya

"I have got the matter examined in the department. It has been informed that the suggestion to utilise post office infrastructure for establishing Jan Aushadhi Kendras and to leverage India Post's extensive logistics and last-mile delivery network for transportation and doorstep delivery of medicines is appreciated," Scindia told Siroya in a letter.

"The proposal has significant potential to enhance access to affordable medicines, particularly in rural and remote areas. The matter has been taken up with the department of pharmaceuticals to explore the feasibility of such a collaboration. Further action will be taken after due consultation to ensure effective and seamless implementation," Scindia stated.

Mamata didi, this election, you may wear a bandage on your leg, head or hand, but people of Bengal will not vote for you
Political Theatre
TMC does not indulge in politics with religion. The BJP is doing politics with the Ram Mandir, and you (Humayun Kabir) are doing politics with Babri Masjid

Poll vault

Reel politics

"I always come to meetings dressed in a white shirt and a white dhoti. But today I have worn a coloured floral shirt. Do you know why? In this age of Instagram reels, I have to dress colourfully to get your attention," said Sivaganga MP and Congress leader Karti P Chidambaram at a campaign meeting. Karti was apparently referring to the impact actor Vijay has had on the Assembly elections, especially among Gen Z. His campaign speeches are sharp and witty.

ETB SIVAPRIYAN, CHENNAI

Emotional connect

Porkodi, the AIADMK candidate in Thiru Vi Ka Nagar constituency, has struck a chord with local people by speaking about her slain husband K Armstrong, the Tamil Nadu BSP chief who was murdered in 2024. She also takes along her three-old-daughter, Savitribhai for the campaign, adding a personal touch. People bond with the child and give Porkodi a rousing reception.

ETB SIVAPRIYAN, CHENNAI

Meet the leader

Mamata Banerjee
Trinamool Congress
Bhabanipur

Easily the most recognisable face in West Bengal's politics, TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee is seeking a fourth term as chief minister. If she wins, she would become the state's longest-serving CM, next only to Marxist veteran Jyoti Basu. Banerjee became the eighth CM of the state when she assumed office in May 2011 after dislodging the Left from its three-and-a-half decades of power. Since then, she repeated her "magic", steering the TMC in two subsequent state polls (in 2016 and 2021) and in three general elections (in 2014, 2019 and 2024) to keep its toughest challenger, the BJP, at bay from the state. The seven-time former MP and a former Union minister holding multiple portfolios, Banerjee has emerged as among the country's staunchest leaders opposing the ruling BJP in Centre. Despite winning two Assembly bypolls and a full-term state poll with flying colours from the south Kolkata Bhabanipur seat, Banerjee's electoral fortunes aren't without glitches. She narrowly lost the Nandigram seat to BJP's Suvendu Adhikari in 2021, a result she challenged before the Calcutta High Court, and had to contest a subsequent bypoll from Bhabanipur to retain chief ministership. Fighting a strong anti-incumbency, winning Bhabanipur, a perceived TMC citadel which also houses her residence, may not be a cakewalk for Banerjee in the 2026 edition of state polls, especially after significant post-SIR name deletions from the electoral rolls there, political observers say.

Trivia

As the first elected Chief Minister of the composite Madras state, C Rajagopalachari, popularly known as Rajaji, introduced the Kula Kalvi Thittam (hereditary education policy) in 1954. The decision triggered a row, forcing Rajaji to resign. Though he wanted C Subramaniam to succeed him, senior leader K Kamaraj emerged as the frontrunner and eventually took over as the CM in 1954. Kamaraj resigned as a Lok Sabha MP and got elected from Gudiyatham. During his tenure, Kamaraj transformed the education sector and reintroduced the noon meal scheme. Kamaraj brought the party back to power in the 1957 and 1962 elections and resigned voluntarily in 1963, and later became Congress president.

Darjeeling's familiar faultlines

Cash handouts, fragile alliances and the unresolved Gorkhaland dream define a high-stakes poll in the hills

FROM THE GROUND

SUMIT PANDE
KURSEONG, DHNS

The unexpected torrential downpour has led to waterlogging right in front of Sudha's kiosk at Pagla Jhora, the majestic waterfall on the Hill Cart Road that runs alongside the Darjeeling–Siliguri train track. Preparing tea for customers, Sudha sets a saucepan to boil as her husband, Mani, shuffles out with a trenching spade to clear the puddles.

"At least we can buy a gas cylinder with the money that Didi gives us," she says, referring to Lakshmi Bhandar, the direct cash transfer scheme for women initiated by the Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal.

After three consecutive terms in office, the TMC is heavily banking on cash handouts to retain power in West Bengal. So is its only ally in the state: the Anit Thapa-led Bharatiya Gorkha Prajatantrik Morcha (BGPM), for which Mamata Banerjee has left three seats in the Darjeeling hills—Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong. All the seats in the hills will vote in the first phase.

For the TMC, which seeks to project itself as the sole repository of anti-BJP votes and not cede a single seat even to the Congress, the Darjeeling concession is tactical, driven by regional compulsions.

Thapa, who currently heads the semi-autonomous Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA), has fielded local lawyer and businessman-turned- politician Amar Lama from Kurseong, the alpine town nestled amid some of the biggest tea gardens.

At Lama's election office in the central market, campaign agents have arrived to pick up materials. Posters and bills boldly underscore the party's catchphrase: "Save regional identity."

That is precisely what "Pahar ko Raja," or the King of the Hills, as Subhash Ghising was called, set out to do in the 1980s by tapping into the separate statehood sentiment among the Nepali-speaking Gorkha community.

After a violent struggle, the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, a semi-autonomous body mandated to administer the hills, was formed. Ever since, statehood has been the rabbit politicians pull out of the hat every election season, a chimera the people have chased for generations.

In 2007, Bimal Gurung-led Gorkha Janmukti Morcha challenged Ghising's leadership while reigniting the separate statehood movement. An agreement between the West Bengal government and the Centre led to the creation of the GTA in 2011.

Five years later, in 2017, yet another Gorkhaland agitation flared up in the hills that led to the ascension of Anit Thapa's faction in GTA. Since then, Thapa, backed by the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC government in Kolkata, has sought to consolidate his position.

Thapa's opponent, Bimal Gurung's Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM), is contesting this election in alliance with the BJP. All its candidates, interestingly, are in the fray on the BJP symbol. GJM youth wing leader Noman Rai is the BJP candidate from Darjeeling. In Kurseong, the party has fielded Sonam Lama, while former Indian hockey captain Bharat Chettri is contesting from Kalimpong.

In the Lok Sabha polls, however, the BJP has consistently performed well in the Darjeeling seat. In 2009, former Union External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh won by a comfortable margin, followed by SS Ahluwalia in 2014. In the last two elections, the local lad Raju Bishta has won on the BJP symbol.

"BGPM is nothing but the TMC's proxy. I'm willing to contest polls and challenge Mamata Banerjee if she fights from Darjeeling. People have not forgotten what happened in 2017," Bishta says, referring to the incident when a West Bengal cabinet meeting in Darjeeling flared tensions and triggered violence.

The contest in the Darjeeling hills has been made more interesting with the entry of a third force, the Indian Gorkha Janshakti Front (IGJF), led by Ajay Edwards, owner of Darjeeling's landmark Glenary's Bakery. His outfit, formally known as the Humro Party, sprang a surprise by bagging the Darjeeling Municipality in the 2022 local body polls.

From Pagla Jhora to Kurseong, everyday struggles intersect with high-voltage politics in the Darjeeling hills. DH PHOTO

WEST BENGAL
Assembly Poll

THREE-WAY CONTEST

- TMC banks on cash schemes like Lakshmi Bhandar, while regional parties foreground "Gorkhaland" and hill identity.
- TMC cedes Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong to ally BGPM to consolidate anti-BJP votes.
- BGPM vs BJP-GJM alliance vs Ajay Edwards' Humro Party adds a new dimension.
- Despite shifting regional alliances, BJP has consistently won the Darjeeling parliamentary seat since 2009.

After SIR axe comes Modi's CAA assurance

PM says Hindu refugee groups protected by Constitution

NEW DELHI, DHNS

After the disappointment of the special intensive revision in West Bengal, disgruntled communities on Saturday got the Prime Minister's assurance on their citizenship.

Speaking at a rally in Purba Bardhaman, Narendra Modi pledged to expedite citizenship applications under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) for Matua, Namasudra and other refugee communities if the saffron party forms the government in West Bengal.

Modi said the rights of the refugees like the Matua and Namasudra communities are protected under CAA.

He added that the objective of the legislation was to safeguard the interests of these refugee communities. "I want to tell the Matua and Namasudra refugee families that they are under the protection of the country's Constitution. Modi enacted the CAA law so that Matua, Namasudra and all refugees get citizenship," the PM said.

Modi's assurance comes at a time when the electoral roll revision has affected the Matuas and minority communities the most in West Bengal.

BJP, in its manifesto, released by Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday, has promised to rehabilitate these communities as well as other Hindu refugee groups.

"After the BJP government is formed, the process of granting citizenship under CAA will be accelerated for all eligible applicants," he said.

"But the infiltrators, they should start packing their bags; it is time to leave."

Modi also said the Uniform Civil Code would be implemented in Bengal as soon as the party comes to power. "The security of the nation is paramount to us. BJP is resolved to implement the UCC in Bengal and put an end to the politics of appeasement once and for all," he said at a rally in Murshidabad on the same day.

A woman holds a portrait of PM Narendra Modi during a public rally in Dakshin Dinajpur, West Bengal. PTI

BJP tried to scrap my Bhabanipur bid: Mamata

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday claimed that the BJP tried to get her candidature from Bhabanipur seat in south Kolkata cancelled by attempting to file two false cases against her, but the bid was foiled by TMC workers and the public, reports PTI.

Banerjee, while addressing an election rally at Keshiyari in Paschim Medinipur district, accused the BJP of "forcefully" deleting the names of 90 lakh voters from the electoral rolls during the SIR exercise.

"The BJP, with the EC's help, attempted to invalidate my candidature from Bhabanipur yesterday by trying to file two false affidavits against me, but we foiled their game plan," said Banerjee.

POLL DIGEST

Assam journalists decry media attacks

GUWAHATI, PTI: Journalists in Guwahati on Saturday expressed concern over "attacks on the media" during the recently held Assembly elections in the state, according to a statement.

At a protest meeting at the Gauhati Press Club, attended by around 150 journalists, it was decided to submit memorandums to President Droupadi Murmu, PM Narendra Modi and the EC on the issue.

They cited remarks by CM Himanta Biswa Sarma that he would "politically and intellectually" finish off two media groups if returned to power, as well as the attack on the North Lakhimpur office of the Assamese daily *Asomiya Pratidin* on Thursday night, hours after polling ended, the statement said.

Record 85.96% turnout in Assam Assembly polls

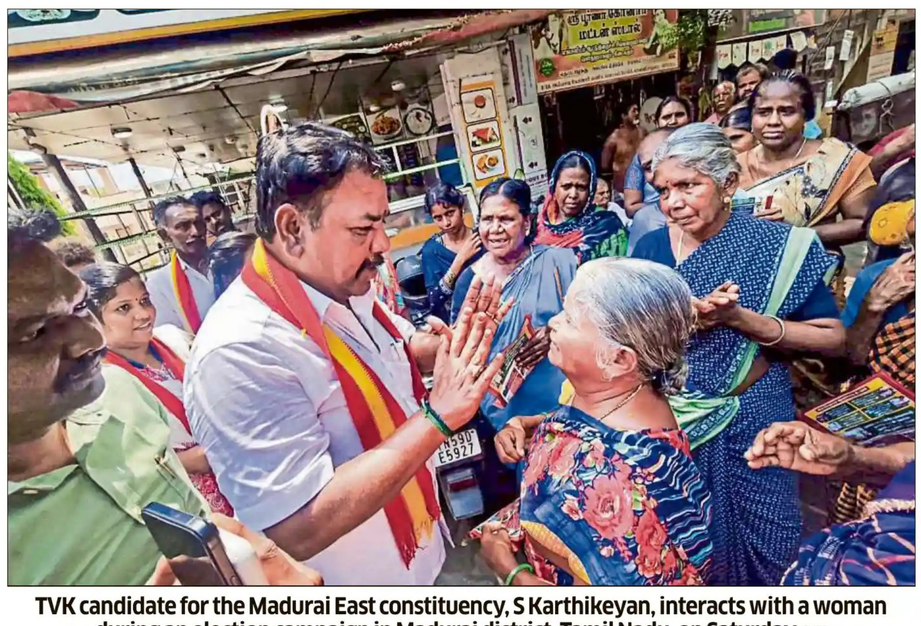
GUWAHATI, PTI: A record 85.96% of Assam's 2.50 crore electorate voted in the April 9 Assembly polls, the Election Commission said on Saturday.

This is the highest turnout in the state's history, surpassing 84.72% in 2016, when the BJP first came to power. Turnout had dipped to 82.04% in 2021, when polling was held under Covid-19 protocols.

After polling ended on Thursday, the EC had estimated turnout at 85.64%, later revised to 85.91% on Friday and updated again as data from all polling stations came in, an official said.

Women voters outnumbered men, recording a turnout of 86.54% compared to 85.37% among male voters. Around 35.85% of third-gender voters also exercised their franchise.

DOORSTEP OUTREACH


TVK candidate for the Madurai East constituency, S Karthikeyan, interacts with a woman during an election campaign in Madurai district, Tamil Nadu, on Saturday. PTI

SIR phase 2: Voters' list of 12 states/UTs pruned by over 10%

NEW DELHI, PTI: The combined voters' list of nine states and three Union Territories has been pruned by 10.2% following the SIR exercise carried out by the Election Commission, with over 60 lakh dead voters removed, data shared by the poll panel and its state officials shows.

When phase II of the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls was announced by the EC on October 27, the voter base across the 12 states and UTs stood at more than 50.99 crore. Post the exercise, the voters' list stands at 45.81 crore, a decline of over 5.18 crore. In percentage terms, the electoral rolls have been reduced by 10.2%.

As many as 66,88,636 deceased electors have been removed from the rolls, with the maximum of 25.47 lakh from Uttar Pradesh, followed by 24.16 lakh from poll-going West Bengal.

Additionally, 63.16 lakh names were deleted following objections and adjudication during the SIR exercise.

The second phase of SIR has now been completed with the final electoral rolls of UP, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Puducherry, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Goa published on different dates.

UP was the last state to release its final rolls on Friday.

While the exercise, which kept the EC in the news, had earlier been completed in Bihar, the second phase covering the above-mentioned 12 states and UTs, with nearly 51 crore electors, has now concluded.

TRIANGULAR FIGHT

DMK defends as AIADMK, TVK push back in Chennai

ETB SIVAPRIYAN
CHENNAI, DHNS

For the first time in decades, this metropolis is witnessing an intense three-cornered contest, with actor Vijay's Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam (TVK) challenging the ruling DMK and opposition AIADMK in many of the 16 Assembly constituencies.

TAMIL NADU
Assembly Poll

The fact that Vijay is also contesting from Perambur — a gutsy move for a newcomer politician — has made the April 23 electoral battle even more interesting.

Except for the 1991 'wave election', Chennai has largely been DMK's bastion, until AIADMK supremo J Jayalalithaa broke the citadel by winning half of the 14 seats in 2006 and nearly sweeping the city in 2011.

AIADMK, which posted a pathetic performance in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections by forfeiting deposits in two city seats, has upped the ante this election by fielding heavyweights, including former ministers like D Jayakumar from Royapuram.

With internal surveys showing good leads for the party, not just Vijay but almost all the familiar faces of TVK have entered the fray from Chennai, pushing the well-entrenched Dravidian parties to sweat it out.

TVK is expected to eat into the votes of both DMK and AIADMK, but the jury is still out on who will be affected the most.

For DMK, the battle is much more prestigious, as both Chief Minister M K Stalin and his deputy Udhayanidhi Stalin are contesting from Kolathur and Chepauk-Tiruvallikeni here.

TVK is expected to give a tough fight to DMK and AIADMK in North Chennai, a congested neighbourhood with slums plagued by traffic congestion and other urban problems, where youngsters and the lower-middle class openly favour the actor.

Vijay contesting from Perambur, a North Chennai locality, could lead to a ripple effect across the region.

While acknowledging DMK's "good work" on infrastructure, residents point out the rampant illegal sale of ganja in residential areas.

"We get piped water and drainage facilities are also fine. Waterlogging in our area has also become a thing of the past in the last five years. But the sale of ganja has increased, with even teenagers becoming addicted to it. Also, several TASMAC liquor shops have mushroomed in our locality, which isn't a good thing," Mala, a fruit vendor in Vyasarpadi, told *DH*.

DMK seeks votes by flaunting the construction of phase-II of the Chennai Metro, new swanky buses and bus stands, flyovers, co-working spaces and other infrastructure projects. The party has been widely credited with changing the face of the city over the last three decades.

However, bad interior roads, hastily relaid roads where Metro construction is on, and waterlogging despite spending crores on storm water drains are some of the issues that could affect the party's prospects.

"Whenever DMK is in power, the city has always received some big-bang projects, but such projects were missing in the last five years. Many interior roads have been in bad shape for a long time, and it has become very difficult to commute. These are some of the issues that DMK could have focused on," Rajkumar, a software professional in Kodambakkam, told *DH*.

Residents also complain about the lack of a strong mayor that has contributed to several problems, including the city being untidy.

Chennai check

CONSTITUENCIES:
Dr R K Nagar ● Perambur ● Kolathur ● Villivakkam ● Thiru Vi.Ka. Nagar ● Egmore ● Royapuram ● Harbour ● Chepauk-Tiruvallikeni ● Thousand Lights ● Anna Nagar ● Virugambakkam ● Saidapet ● T. Nagar ● Mylapore ● Velachery

28.93 lakh Total voters	**13.95 lakh** Male
4.96 lakh Female	**868** Third gender

RESULTS: (16 SEATS)
2011 AIADMK+: **14** DMK: **2**
2016 DMK: **10** AIADMK: **6**
2021 DMK: 16

D Jayakumar

TVK chief Vijay

MK Stalin

INTERNAL CHURN Fallout highlights a pattern of dissent & drift within party's core team

Kejriwal's AAP-arent troubles deepen as Chadha signals exit

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The meteoric rise and sudden fall of Rajya Sabha member Raghav Chadha — the latest among Arvind Kejriwal's core team to have a fallout with the AAP chief — illustrate a trend that is rarely seen in other established parties.

Desertions and sidelining are not unusual in any party, but the frequency with which senior leaders have left a young outfit like the AAP is startling. Some left due to ideological differences, some others were upset with Kejriwal's style of functioning, while a few quit when the AAP could not satisfy their ambitions.

The list — starting in at least 2015, the year Kejriwal stormed to power in Delhi — includes Prashant Bhushan, Yogendra Yadav, Kumar Vishwas, Ashutosh, Ashish Khetan, Mayank Gandhi, Alka Lamba, Kapil Mishra, and Naveen Jaihind. Some turned detractors and joined other parties, while others remained critical of but not opposed to the AAP.

Chadha's name is the latest addition, months after Swati Maliwal, another Rajya Sabha member, snapped ties with the AAP after she alleged that Kejriwal's aide beat her up when she went to meet him.

Rise and strife

Chadha, now 37, met Kejriwal in his early 20s, as Anna Hazare led the India Against Corruption movement. He was made a national spokesperson when the AAP was subsequently formed. He was also part of a core team that wrote the party's manifestos and was even treasurer for some time.

Once the AAP was in power, he was appointed financial advisor to then-deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, and was fielded in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, which he lost. The next year saw him winning an Assembly seat, and Kejriwal overlooked experienced leaders to make him vice-chairman of Delhi Jal Board (DJB).

When the AAP won Punjab, Kejriwal wanted a trusted hand to watch over Bhagwant Mann. Thus, Chadha was made an advisor to the Punjab CM, eliciting monikers like "Super CM" and allegations of corruption. Nothing impacted Chadha's rise as he was made a Rajya Sabha member at the age of 33.

Even before his fallout with Kejriwal, Chadha had created ripples in the Rajya Sabha when he was suspended following accusations of putting names of MPs in a motion without their approval, and was even accused of forgery. However, the party stood behind him.

In the Rajya Sabha, one could sense the unease in the AAP ranks as Chadha tried to steal the limelight. When floor leader Sanjay Singh was arrested in a case, there was even an attempt to install Chadha as "interim leader", but then chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar rejected it. Sources said seniors in the Opposition advised Chadha not to make such ventures.

Raghav Chadha is the latest in a long line of leaders to distance himself from Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP. PTI FILE

Fall and fallout

Things began to change after Kejriwal and his team started to feel the heat from Central agencies over the Delhi government's functioning, including one on DJB during Chadha's tenure. One leader after another were arrested, reaching a crescendo with Kejriwal just before the Lok Sabha polls.

When Kejriwal was arrested, Chadha was in the United Kingdom for eye surgery. His party colleagues defended him for his absence on TV channels, but a post of solidarity on social media was yet to come. Tongues began wagging. Chadha later returned and visited Kejriwal when he came out.

Chadha did not take any steps to bridge the gap. He was no longer a part of the core group, but embarked on an image-building exercise in the Rajya Sabha by raising issues like problems of exploitation at toll plazas, excessive bank charges, and gig workers.

"The question is, are you standing with one when it is needed? He did not do that. His case is that of a successful ladder-climber. The moment there was a difficulty, he ran away," a senior AAP functionary said.

The last straw came when Chadha refused to express solidarity with Kejriwal and others when they were discharged in the liquor scam case. He did not post on social media, refused to come to party headquarters for celebrations, and skipped a party programme days later. On April 2, the AAP removed him as its deputy leader in the Rajya Sabha.

The AAP had faced criticism over its choices for the Rajya Sabha, with people from non-political and business backgrounds taking the majority of its 10 seats. Eventually, it was Kejriwal's close aides who rebelled and helped along allegations that the party was working in tandem with the BJP.

Chadha had also distanced himself from the Opposition, not signing a notice that sought the removal of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, and also not walking out with the Opposition on multiple occasions. He denied those charges, and also refused to back off as the AAP attacked him.

With the AAP facing a political crisis, the question now is how Kejriwal plans to address the desertion of his close aides.

Legal reforms must for robust economy, says CJI

ASHISH TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

CJI Surya Kant

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Saturday called for an overhaul of the legal architecture to meet the demands of an evolving economy, saying that the country's transformation into a $10-trillion economy cannot be achieved through capital or policy alone.

Speaking at the 'Rule of Law Convention 2026' on the theme 'Legal Reform Roadmap to a USD 10 Trillion Bharat', organised by the Bar Association of India, the CJI said the topic was not merely an aspiration for the country but a serious consideration and dealt with not a "marginal" query but one of the most important questions.

"I am confident that we will surely rise to the occasion. A $10-trillion mark will not be built by capital or policy alone. It will be built in no small part by the quality of the legal system that upholds the rule of law and the promises on which all of that depends. Our country never lacked the legal talent to build that system. ...," he said.

He asserted that the capital required for a robust economy is dependent on institutional reliability and that investors, before committing, would want to know whether the legal system governing that investment would remain honest, consistent and predictable over the years of their commitment.

Underlining the changing nature of commercial disputes over the last two decades, he said, from being relatively straightforward, centred on non-payments, breach of supply agreements and clear questions of liability, they have now emerged from relationships of far greater complexity and duration.

He said that the present commercial laws had served the country reasonably well, but the legitimacy of law was in its ability to remain responsive to the society it served.

'Technology a tool that strengthens equality before law'

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Saturday said technology is no longer an administrative convenience but has become a constitutional instrument and a tool that strengthens equality before the law, expands access to justice, and allows the judiciary to transcend procedural rigidities.

Speaking at the inaugural function of the National Conference on Judicial Process Re-engineering and Digital Transformation, CJI Kant said that at the core of any justice system lies a simple but enduring promise that every individual, regardless of means or circumstances, must be able to access justice in a timely and effective way.

First India-flagged ship crosses Strait of Hormuz after US-Iran ceasefire

Ninth Indian vessel to exit Persian Gulf since early March

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

People wait with empty LPG cylinders to avail refilled ones in Ranchi, Jharkhand, on Saturday. PTI

In a significant development, an India-flagged liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) tanker, Jag Vikram, has successfully crossed the Strait of Hormuz — the first such transit by an Indian vessel since the announcement of a temporary two-week ceasefire between the United States and Iran.

The tanker navigated the strategic chokepoint between Friday night and Saturday morning and was spotted in the Gulf of Oman, east of the Strait, on Saturday afternoon, proceeding eastwards, according to ship-tracking data.

This passage marks a return of Indian shipping activity through one of the world's most critical energy routes.

15 ships stuck

Jag Vikram is the ninth Indian vessel to exit the Persian Gulf since early March, while about 15 India-flagged ships remain in the region, awaiting passage. Several foreign-flagged ships carrying India-bound cargo also remain stranded in the Persian Gulf.

Owned by Mumbai-based Great Eastern Shipping Company, Jag Vikram is a mid-sized gas carrier with a deadweight capacity of over 26,000 tonnes. It was estimated that the ship was carrying around 20,000 tonnes of LPG.

According to MarineTraffic data, hundreds of vessels remain in the region, including 426 tankers, 34 LPG carriers and 19 LNG vessels, many of which had been effectively stranded amid the disruption.

312 stranded Indian fishermen to return home

NEW DELHI, PTI: A group of 312 Indian fishermen, who were stranded in Iran amid escalating regional tensions, returned to India through Armenia, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday.

The fresh batch was brought back home a week after 345 Indian fishermen were evacuated from Iran.

The external affairs minister thanked his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan for Armenia's assistance in return of the Indian nationals.

"Another 312 Indian fishermen safely evacuated from Iran to India through Armenia. Thank the Government of Armenia and my friend @AraratMirzoyan for making it possible," Jaishankar said on social media.

Multi-vehicle collision leaves 13 dead, 30 injured in Bihar's Katihar

KATIHAR (BIHAR), PTI: At least 13 people were killed and 30 others injured following a collision involving a bus, a truck, and a pickup van in Bihar's Katihar district on Saturday evening, a police officer said.

The accident took place at 6.30 pm on NH-31 in Kodha block of Katihar, Superintendent of Police Shikhar Choudhary told reporters.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar announced an exgratia of Rs 2 lakh to the next of kin of each the deceased, and Rs 50,000 to each injured.

While initial reports said seven people died in the accident, six of the injured succumbed during treatment.

A local police official said those travelling in the pickup van were coming from the neighbouring Purnea district.

He said that how the accident occurred is being investigated. It is suspected that the bus driver, who is among the injured people, lost control of the vehicle leading to the crash.

Police said injured people have been taken to the nearest government hospital in Purnea.

People pull passengers out of the mangled bus after its collision with a truck and a pickup van in Bihar's Katihar district on Saturday. PTI

Mathura boat tragedy toll at 11

The death toll in the boat capsize tragedy in Yamuna river in Mathura has climbed to 11 after the recovery of one more body in the search and rescue operation on Saturday, officials said, adding that the operator of the ill-fated vessel has been arrested, reports PTI from Mathura.

An official said that the body of a man was recovered near Devraha Baba Ghat, almost 1 km from the spot where the boat had capsized in Vrindavan. The deceased has been identified as Manik Tandon (42) of Ludhiana.

The tragedy occurred on Friday when a boat carrying over two dozen tourists hit a floating drum of a pontoon bridge and capsized near Kesi Ghat.

Diktats by khap panchayats unconstitutional: Rajasthan HC

JODHPUR, PTI: In a strong rebuke to extra-legal community bodies, the Rajasthan High Court has held that diktats issued by self-styled caste and khap panchayats ranging from social boycott to steep monetary penalties are unconstitutional and undermine the rule of law.

Calling the issue a serious social concern, a single bench of Justice Farjand Ali on Friday directed the Rajasthan government to frame a clear policy backed by a standard operating procedure (SOP) to tackle complaints of social boycott.

The bench was hearing a batch of 11 petitions highlighting instances of coercion and ostracism across districts such as Sirohi, Barmer, Nagaur, Balotra, Jalore and Jodhpur.

The petitioners contended that despite complaints, authorities often failed to act decisively against such informal bodies.

Taking note of recurring patterns, the court observed that these caste forums function as parallel adjudicatory systems, issuing binding orders without any statutory authority.

Power transition begins in Bihar as Nitish Kumar shifts base

ABHAY KUMAR
PATNA

A day after he took oath as a Rajya Sabha member, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has started packing his bags. One tractor after another was seen on Saturday shifting Nitish's luggage from the Chief Minister's official residence at 1, Aney Marg to 7, Circular Road, his new allotted bungalow.

Nitish Kumar

This way, Nitish is all set to become the neighbour of Lalu Prasad and Rabri Devi, both former CMs, who stay at the adjoining 10, Circular Road.

This has also set the ball rolling for Nitish, who remained at the helm for two decades, to become an ex-CM in the next couple of days, as the official bungalow has been allotted to him in the same capacity.

Though no official date has been announced for Nitish's resignation, sources in the ruling camp said he may tender his resignation on April 13 or 14, and the new chief minister is likely to take oath on April 15.

"The swearing-in of the new CM is likely to take place at Lok Bhawan, the new avtaar of Raj Bhawan. Last year, the oath of chief minister and his Cabinet took place in November 2025 at the historic Gandhi Maidan, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi too was present. This time, neither Modi nor Amit Shah is likely to grace the occasion," said the ruling party source.

"In case the PM decides to attend the swearing-in ceremony of the first-ever BJP CM in Bihar, then the oath function may shift to April 18," the source added.

Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav said the saffron party is using Nitish's face to garner votes.

IN BRIEF

Indian-born cheetah gives birth to 4 cubs at Kuno

SHEOPUR (MP), PTI: A 24-month-old Indian-born cheetah gave birth to four cubs at the Kuno National Park on Saturday, marking the first recorded cheetah birth in the wild at the sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh, officials said.

This took the number of cheetahs in India to 57, officials said. The female cheetah who gave birth to the litter on Saturday is an offspring of the South African-born Gamini.

Union minister Bhupender Yadav said since cheetahs were first brought to the KNP from Africa in 2022, this was the "first recorded birth in the wild" and also the "first such instance involving an Indian-born female."

Jaishankar meets Indian diaspora in UAE

ABU DHABI, PTI: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday began his official visit to the UAE by interacting with the members of the Indian Community.

The external affairs minister, who is on a two-day visit to the UAE, is expected to focus on exchanging views on the West Asia conflict.

"Started my visit to the UAE by interacting with the members of the Indian Community. Spoke about GOI's efforts towards their well - being and security amidst the West Asia conflict," Jaishankar posted on X.

"Appreciated their contributions to the local society during these difficult times. As well as the support of the Government of the UAE in ensuring the welfare of the Indian community," the post read.

Punjab govt nod to tougher sacrilege bill

CHANDIGARH, PTI: The Punjab Cabinet on Saturday approved stringent amendments to the law on sacrilege to make punishments more severe, including life imprisonment.

The Cabinet cleared the Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Bill, 2026, which proposes enhanced penalties, including life imprisonment, to deter incidents of 'beadbi' (sacrilege) and uphold the sanctity of Guru Granth Sahib.

According to an official statement, the move comes in view of past incidents of sacrilege that have hurt public sentiments and disturbed communal harmony.

The law will be introduced in the Assembly on Monday.

Drug smugglers to lose Aadhaar, passports: J&K L-G

JAMMU, PTI: Asserting that the full force of law will be used to dismantle cross-border drug trafficking networks, Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday announced sweeping punitive measures, including confiscation of properties and cancellation of key documents like Aadhaar of the accused.

Leading a 'padyatra' (march) from M A Stadium to Parade Ground here to mark the beginning of a 100-day intensive campaign in J&K to make it drugs-free, the Lt Governor said, "Our neighbour is using cross-border smuggling to poison our communities and undermine our nation's future."

"Every officer carries one obligation: this must stop. The full force of the law is now directed at smugglers. Their networks will be dismantled without delay," he said.

The Lt Governor vowed decisive and uncompromising action against drug smugglers.

"The administration will confiscate all property, revoke licences, passports, Aadhaar, and freeze bank accounts of all those involved. This crackdown against drug smugglers will echo through generations," he said, adding that drug abuse is among J&K's gravest challenges and reaffirmed that the administration is committed to ending the menace.

ANTI-DRUG DRIVE

- J&K L-G vows full legal force to dismantle cross-border trafficking
- Properties to be confiscated; Aadhaar, passports, licences may be revoked
- Statewide campaign launched to make J&K "drug-free"
- Local bodies to aid surveillance and action against traffickers

Close shave: Bhujbal chopper misses helipad

MUMBAI, DHNS: In what came as a scare, Maharashtra minister and veteran OBC leader Chhagan Bhujbal had a close shave when a chartered helicopter in which he was flying landed at a parking lot amid a cloud of dust, around one km away from the designated temporary helipad at Pune's Purandar on Saturday

Chhagan Bhujbal

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said the matter would be investigated.

"There has been no accident; we have all emerged safely. ...the helicopter landed in the car parking area simply because the helipad was not visible," Bhujbal said.

RESTORING TRUST Neighbours must seek common ground despite unresolved tensions

India and Bangladesh are moving cautiously to repair frayed ties

SMITA SHARMA

The past few weeks have seen a cautious but positive energy in India-Bangladesh relations. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Tarique Rahman, won a landslide victory in the February elections this year. Since then, Delhi and Dhaka have made the right moves to stabilise a crucial relationship with shared history, culture and borders, which had ridden a storm since the student protests in 2024 that led to the ouster of Sheikh Hasina. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was among the first world leaders to congratulate Rahman after his win, despite India's past ties with Hasina's Awami League, which was barred from these elections.

The high-level visit to Delhi by Bangladesh's new Foreign Minister, Khalilur Rahman, has just concluded. A veteran diplomat of measured words with a long-standing career at the UN, he served as National Security Advisor in the interim government led by Mohammad Yunus. He last visited India in November 2025 to attend the Colombo Security Conclave NSA meet, where he held talks with Ajit Doval at a time when anti-India rhetoric was running high in Bangladesh. In politics, it is rare for an appointee of a past government to be retained by a new leader in such a senior role, reflecting the trust placed in him by the Prime Minister.

Accompanying Rahman this time was another senior leader, Humayun Kobir, Foreign Affairs Advisor, who has the ear of the Prime Minister. The two men are at the helm of shaping foreign relations, including with India, the country's largest neighbour. Interestingly, the visit was described as a goodwill one rather than an official engagement. Both sides refrained from on-camera media remarks, issuing only written statements to allow space for dialogue without the burden of outcomes and rhetoric. "Let us understand each other. Let us start slowly but steadily," said a senior Bangladeshi official.

"There is widespread consensus that this visit shows a keenness on both sides to reset the relationship. A lot of work still needs to be done, but this visit is definitely a great beginning," said Shafqat Munir of Dhaka-based think tank BIPSS. Mutual trust remains key to the future of bilateral ties. For Bangladesh, the emphasis is on "equity, fairness and mutual dignity" over and above individual issues of concern.

In his election manifesto, Tarique Rahman promised a "Bangladesh First" doctrine with the slogan "Friend Yes, Master No", underlining that Dhaka would not be a puppet of any major power and would not interfere in others' internal matters. For India, Bangladesh's newfound closeness with the Pakistani establishment and ISI, along with the resurgence of Jamaat as the main opposition with 77 seats in Parliament, remain areas to watch. These issues were also on the table when Bangladesh's intelligence agency chief, Major-General Kaiser Rashid Chowdhury, visited Delhi just days after Rahman's swearing-in and held talks with the RAW chief and the Director-General of Military Intelligence.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman during a meeting in New Delhi on April 8, 2026. PTI FILE

"India's security concerns in Bangladesh remain the same — no space for terrorism targeting India; no room for extremist ideologies that target India," said Indrani Bagchi, CEO of Ananta Aspen. Delhi would not want a new lease of life for radical outfits such as HUJI (Harkat-ul-Jihad Islami) or JMB (Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh), or a repeat of past arms haul incidents aimed at causing security disruptions in India's Northeast.

It is learnt that Bangladeshi leaders stressed that Dhaka is "cognisant" of Delhi's security concerns, particularly in relation to Pakistan, and would not allow them to be "compromised". In a social media post marking Genocide Day, which commemorates the victims of March 25, 1971, Rahman recalled how Pakistani occupation forces killed Bangladeshis and described Operation Searchlight as "one of the most heinous genocides in history". The message served as a reminder that the BNP government has not lost sight of the country's brutal past, even as it renews ties with Pakistan. The government has also maintained that Bangladesh will not enter into security partnerships with any country, including the US or China.

Dhaka insists that the mistakes of the past must not be repeated and that relations should focus on people-to-people ties rather than individuals. The presence in India of Sheikh Hasina and her former home minister, Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal — both sentenced to death by the International Crimes Tribunal in Dhaka — remains a politically sensitive issue. However, the BNP government is engaging with New Delhi without making ties hostage to a single issue, even as their extradition remains a key demand, along with the handover of suspected killers of youth leader Shaheed Osman Hadi, who are currently in the custody of the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

"Both sides agreed that the arrested individuals will be returned to Bangladesh in accordance with the procedures laid out in the extradition treaty between the two countries," said a statement issued by Bangladesh's Foreign Ministry.

For relations to truly stabilise, both sides will have to control polarising domestic rhetoric that casts a shadow over ties. Former senior diplomat Mohammad Sufiur Rahman, in a recent article in Prothom Alo, wrote: "Bangladeshis resent the unjustified labelling of Bengali-speaking populations as illegal migrants." He added, "Additionally, the tendency to portray incidents in Bangladesh involving Hindus as religious persecution fuels mistrust."

India would do well to ease medical visas and resume cricketing ties with its neighbour once the shrill rhetoric over Rohingya Muslims and Bangladeshi infiltrators by BJP campaigners in Assam and West Bengal subsides. Dhaka, meanwhile, is not without gratitude for India's recent supply of diesel amid a global energy crisis driven by the Gulf War.

It is too early to say whether Tarique Rahman can deliver on his security guarantees to New Delhi. With Bangladesh's median age at just 27, it is imperative to reset relations through the lens of present realities rather than solely through the prism of the 1971 war.

(The writer is a journalist and Visiting Faculty, Kautilya School of Public Policy)

WORLD AT A GLANCE

Children carry crosses, on the day of the arrival of the Holy Fire at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in the Israeli-occupied West Bank on Saturday. REUTERS

Mob attacks Hindu households, businesses in Bangladesh

▸ A Muslim spiritual leader was hacked to death for allegedly insulting Islam, while shops and households owned by Hindus were vandalised in two separate mob attacks in western Kushtia and northwestern Rangpur in Bangladesh on Saturday, PTI reports from Dhaka.

An irate mob attacked several Hindu households and businesses in the pre-dawn hours following the death of a Muslim youth in their neighbourhood in Rangpur, about 300-odd km northwest of Dhaka. Police claimed that a "third party" carried out the vandalism to divert attention from the overnight murder of a man named Rakib Hassan. According to Prothom Alo, more than a hundred members of the Hindu community live in the Daspara market area, where Hassan was allegedly murdered by drug peddler Mohammad Momin over a previous dispute.

Reporters found Momin's house vacant as he had gone into hiding, while his family members feared retaliatory attacks, the newspaper said.

Police said the attack took place even though the deceased youth's family stated that the Hindu community had no involvement in his murder.

Boy locked in van since 2024 rescued

▸ A nine-year-old boy was rescued this week after being locked in his father's utility van in eastern France since 2024, according to the local prosecutor. The child has been hospitalised, and his father detained, AP/PTI reports from Paris.

Police were alerted by a neighbour to the sounds of a child coming from a van on Monday in the village of Hagenbach, near the borders of Switzerland and Germany, according to a statement from Prosecutor Nicolas Heitz released on Saturday. After forcing the van open, officers found the child "lying in a foetal position, naked, covered by a blanket, on top of a mound of rubbish and near excrement", the statement said. The child was clearly malnourished and could no longer walk because he had remained in a seated position for so long, it added.

Members of the girl group Katseye perform onstage during the 2026 Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival at the Empire Polo Club in Indio, California on Friday. AFP

Russia, Ukraine swap prisoners

▸ Russia and Ukraine exchanged 175 prisoners of war (PoWs) each as the 32-hour Easter truce announced by the Kremlin began at 4 pm on Saturday, PTI reports from Moscow.

President Vladimir Putin on Thursday declared the 32-hour ceasefire over the Orthodox Easter weekend. According to his order, Russian forces are to observe the ceasefire from 4 pm (local time) on Saturday until the end of Sunday along the nearly 1,300 km-long front in eastern Ukraine. In addition to the exchange of 175 PoWs by each side, Ukraine has also released seven Russian civilians who were earlier taken hostage from the western region of Kursk, Russian ombudswoman Tatiana Maskalkova told Rossia 24 state television.

Rich-poor divide deepens: UN

▸ A UN reports has concluded that the gap between rich and poor nations is growing even wider as actions agreed to by many countries last year, including overhauling the major global financial institutions, remain unfulfilled promises, AP/PTI reports from United Nations.

The report assessing the blueprint adopted in Seville, Spain, last June to narrow the gap and achieve UN development goals for 2030 was issued ahead of next week's spring meetings in Washington of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, the main global financial institutions promoting economic growth.

Pak military contingent deployed to Saudi Arabia

Troops and jets sent under defence pact to boost regional security

LAHORE, PTI

A Pakistani military contingent comprising around 13,000 soldiers and 10 to 18 jets has reached Saudi Arabia as part of a joint strategic defence agreement signed last year, the Gulf kingdom announced on Saturday.

The contingent's deployment to King Abdulaziz Air Base in the eastern sector includes fighter jets and support aircraft from the Pakistan Air Force, according to a statement from Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Defence.

The deployment aims to enhance joint military coordination, improve operational readiness between the armed forces of the two countries, and support security and stability at regional and international levels, the statement added. A Pakistani government official also confirmed that troops and jets had been sent to Saudi Arabia as part of the two countries' strategic defence agreement, under which any attack on one country would be considered an attack on the other.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman after signing a joint defence pact in Riyadh. AP/PTI FILE

An expert on international affairs, Mohammad Mehdi, told PTI that Pakistan had sent aircraft and troops to Saudi Arabia last month, but the development was disclosed only now by the Saudi authorities.

"At least 13,000 Pakistani soldiers and 10 to 18 fighter jets landed in Saudi Arabia. As many as 10,000 soldiers are already present in the country," Mehdi said.

He added that Pakistani soldiers and fighter jets are there solely for the defence of Saudi Arabia.

US revokes green cards of more Iranians

The Trump administration has revoked the green cards of more long-term Iranian residents of the US who are related to current or former senior Iranian officials, AP/PTI reports from Washington. The State Department said on Saturday it had taken action against Seyed Eissa Hashemi, a Los Angeles-area teacher, his wife and son, all of whom are Iranian-born lawful permanent residents of the US. They had been taken into custody by immigration authorities and are slated for deportation. Hashemi is the son of Masoumeh Ebtekar, who served as a spokeswoman for the militants who took over the US Embassy in 1979 and was later appointed as Iran's first female vice president.

UK halts Chagos deal after US withdraws support

LONDON, AP/PTI: Britain's agreement to hand Mauritius the Chagos Islands, home to a strategic UK-US military base, has been put on indefinite hold after US President Donald Trump's administration withdrew its support for the deal.

The British government acknowledged on Saturday that legislation to ratify the agreement for the Indian Ocean islands has run out of time in Parliament.

It is the latest fallout from souring relations between Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government and the Trump administration. Trump initially backed the deal but changed his stance in January, calling the proposed transfer of sovereignty of the islands — home to the joint military base on Diego Garcia — "an act of GREAT STUPIDITY".

The UK has since put the bill's progress on hold, and the government now concedes it will run out of time to become law before the current parliamentary session ends in the coming weeks. The legislation is not expected to be included in the list of bills announced by King Charles III for the next session of Parliament, which begins on May 13.

India, US push to boost energy and nuclear cooperation

WASHINGTON, PTI

India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri discussed advancing energy cooperation with the US in nuclear power and emerging areas such as coal gasification and LPG exports during his meeting with US Energy Secretary Chris Wright.

Misri's discussions with Wright focused on "advancing energy security, deepening bilateral energy trade, and identifying new avenues to strengthen the India-US Energy Partnership", the Indian Embassy here said in a social media post on Friday.

US Ambassador to India Sergei Gor, who was also present at the meeting, said the US was ready to cooperate with India on civil nuclear energy, in addition to other areas such as coal gasification and LPG exports.

"Great to spend this (Friday) morning with @SecretaryWright and FS Vikram Misri to discuss the future of US-India energy cooperation. After India's historic passage of the SHANTI Act, we are ready to cooperate on civil nuclear energy, in addition to other areas such as coal gasification and US LPG exports," Gor said in a social media post. Later on Friday night, he hosted Misri at US President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida. "It was a pleasure to host @VikramMisri tonight at Mar-a-Lago. From trade and defence to energy, India and the United States stand ready to work closely together in the months and years ahead," Gor posted on X.

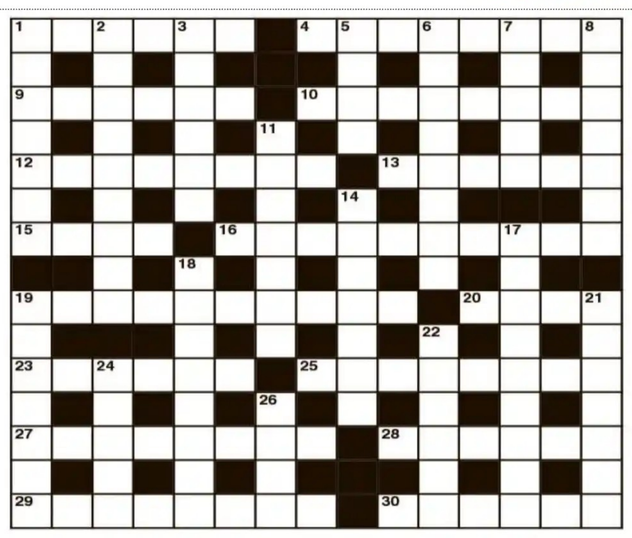
The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy Act (SHANTI Act) is considered one of the most sweeping reforms in India's civil nuclear sector.

The law, which came into force last December, opens up the tightly controlled civil nuclear space for private participation. It also repealed the Atomic Energy Act of 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage (CLND) Act of 2010.

Misri arrived in the US late on Tuesday night for a three-day visit and has held meetings with senior officials from the departments of defence, commerce and state. He also met Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

India's Air Chief Marshal AP Singh was also visiting the US met his US counterpart General Gregory M Guillot.

◆ SUNDAY CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 2675 ◆



ACROSS
1 Grovel (6)
4 Mountain region of SE Europe (8)
9 Sweet music (6)
10 Unchallengeable (4-4)
12 Impartial (8)
13 Artificial hairpiece (6)
15 Neat (4)
16 Avoidance of publicity (3,7)
19 Helpless (4,3,3)
20 Fluent and plausible (4)
23 Close at hand (6)
25 Foot soldiers (8)
27 Easily done (8)
28 Mediterranean principality (6)
29 Go to law (8)
30 Respectable (6)

DOWN
1 Small orange-like fruit (7)
2 Good health and happiness (4-5)
3 Painful experience (6)
5 Expression of regret (4)
6 Begin to understand (6,2)
7 Denude (5)
8 Heartfelt (7)
11 Archives (7)
14 Economical (7)
17 Uncomfortable (3,2,4)
18 Incoherent (8)
19 Person hard to manage (7)
21 Ostracise (7)
22 In abundance (6)
24 Make suitable (5)
26 Monotonous (4)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 4035

CRYPTIC
ACROSS: 9, Think out 10, Le-O 11, O-(ri)pe-nly 12, I-ndee-'d 13, Re-cover 14, Top-E 15, Fell intent 17, Rest-rain 18, Meander 19, (anir)Ella(b) (rev.) 21, Enrage 24, Standing corrected 27, Tere-sa 29, Hold 30, Spar-tan 33, Me-teoric 35, Give no sign 36, M-is-t 37, Anci-ent 38, Al-ling 40, Charge 41, SoN (rev.) 42, Oil-field.
DOWN: 1, Change-less 2, Anne 3, Con-dense 4, Sta-R-ted 5, Convert a try 6, Court scene 7, Better 8, Flipping 10, Lic- it 16, Line-age 20, Lo-Cal 22, Returns 23, In which case 25, Dear Reader 26, Deal gently 28, E-yes-ight 31, Pinnacle 32, Ovation 34, Ent-ire 35, G-RE-en 39, La-I-d.

EASY
ACROSS: 9, Gangrene 10, Ill 11, Really 12, Stodge 13, Traffic 14, Loam 15, Neutrality 17, Handyman 18, Thicken 19, Flan 21, Emboss 24, Pride and Prejudice 27, Maggot 29, Leek 30, Anthrax 33, Headlamp 35, Highwaymen 36, Pits 37, Aladdin 38, Recant 40, Safari 41, Lie 42, Sheepish.
DOWN: 1, Battleship 2, Aged 3, Serenade 4, Beatnik 5, Cliffhanger 6, Fricandeau 7, Barley 8, Almanacs 10, Italy 16, Tacking 20, Lapse 22, Blighty 23, Unflappable 25, Euthanasia 26, Elatedness 28, American 31, Newsreel 32, Agonise 34, Dismay 35, Hedge 39, Cape.

SU DO KU X - 3883

			3					7
			9					
7				6				8
9						7		6
	6	5			2	3		
		9	5			4		1
	5		4					

SOLUTION TO 3882

1	6	3	5	9	7	8	2	4
8	5	4	2	1	3	9	7	6
7	9	2	6	4	8	5	1	3
2	3	9	7	8	1	6	4	5
4	8	7	3	6	5	2	9	1
5	1	6	9	2	4	7	3	8
9	4	8	1	7	6	3	5	2
6	2	5	4	3	9	1	8	7
3	7	1	8	5	2	4	6	9

To solve the puzzle:
The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

BADMINTON ASIA CHAMPIONSHIPS

Ayush's dream run continues

Rising Indian star rallies to stun top seed Vitidsarn to enter title clash

NINGBO (CHINA), PTI

India's Ayush Shetty stormed into the final with a stunning three-game win over top seed and defending champion Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn, assuring himself of at least a silver medal at the Badminton Asia Championships here on Saturday.

The world No. 25 rode on his superior attack and robust defence to script a sensational 10-21, 21-19, 21-17 comeback win over Vitidsarn, the Paris Olympics silver medallist and 2023 world champion.

With the win, Ayush became the first Indian men's singles player after Dinesh Khanna to reach the finals of the prestigious tournament.

Khanna remains the only Indian to win the men's singles gold at the continental meet way back in 1965. Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty won the doubles title in 2023.

Ayush, the US Open Super 300 champion, will face either Chinese Taipei's fourth seed Chou Tien Chen or second-seeded Chinese Shi Yu Qi in the summit clash.

The Indian didn't drop a single game coming into the final. But he had suffered a straight game loss to Vitidsarn the last time they faced off at the Arctic Open last year.

India's Ayush Shetty staged a splendid comeback to beat Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn 10-21, 21-19, 21-17 at the Badminton Asia Championships in Ningbo, China, on Saturday. BADMINTON ASIA

Ayush took time to get into the groove as Vitidsarn dictated play early with pace and precision, racing to a 4-0 lead with a body smash and maintaining a high tempo with sharp, angled returns that kept the Indian on the move.

Comfortable against the Indian's attacking attempts, the Thai mixed his strokes well and surged to an 11-5 lead at the interval before cruising through the opening game with a flurry of smashes and disguised returns.

Vitidsarn's ability to switch from defence to offence in a flash kept him in control as he extended his lead to 18-9. A cross-court smash earned him 10 game points, and he sealed it comfortably when Ayush went wide.

After the change of ends, Ayush made a much sharper start, opening up a 3-1 lead with a jump smash and quickly stretching it to 7-1 as Vitidsarn began to commit unforced errors.

The Indian showcased his athleticism with a series of full-length dives and rapid counter-attacks, taking an 11-4 lead at the break.

Though Ayush briefly lost his way, committing a string of errors that allowed Vitidsarn to claw back to 13-11, he regained control with a cross-court smash and capitalised on a couple of net errors to move to 16-11.

The Indian grabbed six game points with a backhand hand flick at the net and even though the Thai saved five game points, Ayush held his nerve and sealed the second game with a trademark down-the-line smash to force a decider.

Carrying the momentum forward, Ayush opened up a 4-1 lead in the third game. He tightened his defence, retrieving returns he had missed earlier while keeping Vitidsarn under sustained pressure with aggressive play.

He read the Thai better, trusted his attack, and maintained a healthy cushion heading into the final interval.

From there, Ayush took complete control.

Vaishali wins to stretch lead

Indian GM outplays Goryachkina in 11th round

PAPHOS (CYPRUS), PTI

Indian Grandmaster R Vaishali continued her remarkable run and defeated Aleksandra Goryachkina of Russia in the 11th round of the Women's Candidates tournament here on Saturday.

With her fourth victory in the event, Vaishali took her tally to an impressive seven points from 11 games. For Russian Goryachkina, the loss virtually ended her chances in the event as she remained on five points, two adrift of the tournament leader.

Vaishali's victory also ensured that she stretched her lead by a full point over nearest rivals Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine and Jiner Zhu of China who were both held to draws by Kateryna Lagno of Russia and Divya Deshmukh respectively.

R Vaishali

In the open section, Vaishali's younger brother R Praggnanandhaa continued to struggle as he missed out on a simple tactic to score a victory over Matthias Bluebaum of Germany.

Tournament leader by almost a mile, Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan was still fighting it out against Fabiano Caruana of USA.

Results (round 11): Open: R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 4.5) drew with Matthias Bluebaum (5); Anish Giri (Ned, 6.5) drew with Andrey Esipenko (Rus, 4); Fabiano Caruana (USA, 5) playing Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb, 8); Hikaru Nakamura (USA, 5) drew with Wei Yi (Chn, 5).
Women: Aleksandra Goryachkina (Rus, 5) lt to R Vaishali (Ind, 7); Kateryna Lagno (Rus, 5.5) drew with Anna Muzychuk (Ukr); Zhongyi Tan (Chn, 3.5) playing Bibisara Assuabayeva (Kaz, 5); Jiner Zhu (Chn, 6) drew with Divya Deshmukh (Ind, 5).

Compound women salvage pride

PUEBLA (MEXICO), PTI: Indian compound women's trio of Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Madhura Dhamangaonkar and Pragati edged past USA 233-232 to clinch the gold medal at Archery World Cup Stage 1 after recurve archers' flop show here on Saturday.

The medal -- India's first in the season-opening meet -- came as a saving grace as none of the recurve and men's compound archers were on target and returned empty handed.

Alcaraz sets up first final showdown of the season against Sinner

MONTE CARLO, AFP

Carlos Alcaraz lined up a blockbuster Monte Carlo Masters final with chief rival Jannik Sinner after the Spaniard ended the run of local boy Valentin Vacherot in the last four on Saturday.

Alcaraz saw off Vacherot 6-4, 6-4 to stay on track to defend his title and set up a Sunday showdown with Sinner for the world No. 1 ranking.

It will be the first meeting this season between the world's top two players and will decide who will be world No.1 come Monday when the new ATP rankings are released.

"I think it's the dream spot for everyone I would say. I'm fighting for a second Monte Carlo title, he's fighting for his first one," said Alcaraz of Sunday's final.

"It's going to be a really special one. The No.1 is on the line, which will make tomorrow even more special."

Carlos Alcaraz (left) saw off Valentin Vacherot while Jannik Sinner (right) beat Alexander Zverev in their respective Monte Carlo Masters semifinals on Saturday. REUTERS

The 22-year-old Alcaraz is trying to keep hold of top spot and holds a 10-6 lead over Sinner in the head-to-head series.

Alcaraz broke Vacherot three times to wrap up victory in 84 minutes and is bidding for his third title of the season after winning the Australian Open and in Doha.

Easy win for Sinner

Sinner eased his way into the Monte Carlo final for the first time with a clinical 6-1, 6-4 semifinal win over Alexander Zverev earlier on Saturday.

The 24-year-old Italian becomes the first player to reach all three finals of the season's first three Masters 1000 events since Novak Djokovic in 2015.

Roger Federer, in 2006, and Rafael Nadal, 2011, are the only two other players to achieve the feat.

"I'm very happy," said Sinner.

Blasters blow to BFC title chances

ADITYA K HALDER
BENGALURU, DHNS

Bengaluru FC's new head coach Pep Munoz got an early taste of Indian Super League as he was handed a 1-2 defeat on debut by a heated, yet struggling rivals Kerala Blasters, who ended their seven-match winless run in the season.

The defeat was more of BFC's making as Argentine midfielder Braian Sanchez fell for a needless altercation with Matias Hernandez for a straight red card at the 34th minute, leaving his side exposed despite taking the lead through Fallou NDiaye own goal seven minutes earlier.

Second half goals from Victor Bertomeu (61st) and substitute Franchu Feuillassier (79th) pushed KBFC away from the relegation zone (4 points from 8 matches) while Bengaluru FC (14 from 8) remain at fourth and four points away from table toppers Mumbai City FC.

After a relatively quiet first 20 minutes, BFC's first shot on target came in the 24th minute following a build up from the back as centre-back Rahul Bheke played Ryan Williams through to the goal for a shot saved by Arsh Anwer Shaikh.

Bengaluru FC's Braian Emmanuel Sanchez (No. 10) received a red card in the first half, jeopardising their chances against Kerala Blasters during their ISL match at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru on Saturday. DH PHOTO/ BK JANARDHAN

This turned out to be a practice routine for the duo as Bheke made an identical pass a couple of minutes later for Ryan to square it towards Chhetri but a diving centre-back Ndiaye did BFC a favour instead by putting the ball into the net.

BFC, however, dug themselves a hole minutes after the half an hour mark as a off-the-ball argument between Braian and rival Matias turned physical. However, Braian's intention to hit Matias didn't sit well with the match referee Pratik Mondal, who showed the Argentine a straight red while Matias was cautioned with a yellow.

This made the rest of the match for BFC about soaking in pressure of KBFC attack with the aim to hit them on the break. That became evident as early as 48th minute when Poojary put Ryan through the goal for the BFC winger to nudge off his marker for a shot over the crossbar.

The missed opportunity cost dearly as BFC's defensive resistence was eventually broken through a swift counter-attack. Right-back Ebindas Y broke through the middle to set-up Bertomeu clear to the goal and the Spanish striker did the honours by calmly slotting the ball low past Gurpreet Singh.

With the leverage gone, BFC were forced to open up their formation in hunt of a goal while a thin bench strength further made those chances arduous.

Blasters smelled blood as their new Argentine signing Franchu came off the bench to bury in the winner from the right wing as a wide gap opened up on the lest side of BFC defence.

Result: BFC: 1 (Ndiaye 27th OG) lt to KBFC: 2 (Bertomeu 61st, Franchu 79th).

IN BRIEF

Lakshman hat-trick in BDHA win

Lakshman Sri netted a hat-trick as Bellary District Hockey Association beat Flying Hockey Club 4-1 in the KSHA 'A' Division Hockey League Championship on Saturday, reports DHNS.

Results: Bellary District Hockey Association: 4 (Lakshman Sri 8th, 19th, 49th, Manikanta 18th) bt Flying Hockey Club: 1; Blue Star Hockey Club: 4 (Sundar Raj 13th, Shaan 17th, Jeevith 19th, Sridhar 47th) bt Coorg Direwolves: 2 (Rohan 41st, Belliappa 44th).

K'taka TT squad for Jr Nationals

Tanishka Kalabhairav, Abhinav Murthy and Atharva Nawarange will spearhead Karnataka's challenge at the 87th Inter State Junior and Youth National Table Tennis Championships in Dehradun from April 15-23, reports DHNS.

Karnataka squad: Under-19: Boys: Abhinav Murthy, Varun Kashyap, Aarnav N, BR Gaurav.
Girls: Tanishka Kalabhairav, Himanshi Chowdhary, Raashi Rao, Hiya Singh.
U-17: Boys: Atharva Nawarange, Aarnav N, Gaurav Gowda, Shubham Trivedi.
Girls: Tanishka Kalabhairav, Himanshi Chowdhary, Hiya Singh, Shivani Mahendran.
Manager/Coach: Praveen Joshi and Ashwini Padukone.

Bangladesh name squad

Bangladesh named an unchanged squad on Saturday for the first two matches of the upcoming three-match ODI series against New Zealand, the first announcement by the newly formed selection panel reports AFP from Dhaka.

The four-member panel, led by Habibul Bashar Sumon, opted to stick with the same group that featured in the ODI series against Pakistan last month, citing continuity and overall team performance.

Squad: Litton Das, Tanzid Hasan, Soumya Sarkar, Saif Hassan, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Towhid Hridoy, Mahidul Islam, Afif Hossain, Mehidy Hasan Miraz (captain), Rishad Hossain, Tanvir Islam, Taskin Ahmed, Nahid Rana, Shoriful Islam, Mustafizur Rahman.

Sujeet, Abhimanyou clinch gold

BISHKEK, PTI: World U23 champion Sujeet and Abhimanyou registered contrasting victories in their respective men's freestyle final bouts to help India clinch two gold medals on the penultimate day of the Senior Asian Wrestling Championships here on Saturday.

Sujeet, who has been unbeaten so far this year, totally dominated the men's 65kg freestyle final against Umidjon Jalolov of Uzbekistan to register an 8-1 win and become the first Indian since Bajrang Punia's 2019 triumph to win the Asian Championships gold medal in this weight category.

A few minutes later, Abhimanyou made it a double celebration for the Indian camp as he fought back from 0-2 deficit to beat Tulga Tumur Ochir of Mongolia 5-3 in the men's 70kg freestyle final.

BWF's synthetic shuttle trials ruffle feathers

HITA PRAKASH
BENGALURU, DHNS

How is the health and population of geese and ducks in China directly proportional to the smooth running of badminton around the world?

The answer is simple. Since the sport's most essential equipment – a shuttlecock – is made out of 16 feathers picked from a single goose/ duck (mostly from its left wing), the wellness and their numbers become critical. With badminton now more global than ever before, demand for feather shuttles is at an all-time high. In China, the biggest manufacturers, factors such as avian flu outbreaks, rising demand and export restrictions have hit the global supply chain for these shuttles.

Noting the widening gap in the demand-supply of feather shuttles, the Badminton World Federation (BWF) released a statement on April 8, announcing that the world badminton body has approved the use of synthetic shuttlecocks at BWF Grade 3 and junior international tournaments starting this month.

"This initiative forms part of BWF's long-term approach to evaluating synthetic feather shuttlecocks for potential use at the elite level," stated the BWF release, adding that the VICTOR New Carbon Sonic Max Synthetic Shuttlecock (SC-NCS-MAX-12) and YONEX CROSSWIND 70 Synthetic Shuttlecock are the two approved products during this trial phase.

The shortage of geese/ducks' feathers, essential components of a shuttle, has forced BWF to trial synthetic ones at lower-grade tournaments. DH PHOTO/ BK JANARDHAN

Change in material of the shuttle is naturally going to change the dynamics of the game.

"I'm a little concerned about it," says former India international and coach Vimal Kumar.

"Frankly, I think, it's a necessary initiative," feels fellow player-turned-coach Anup Sridhar.

"My fear is that playing with synthetic shuttles will lead to shorter rallies. If one rally ends in 2-3 shots, you cannot say badminton is physically very demanding. There needs to be an exchange of long, good quality rallies. If somebody is attacking, the other person has to retrieve, there are two different styles. That makes the game more interesting," points out Vimal, who competed at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics.

"The transition is not going to be smooth for sure," offers Anup, who took part in the 2008 Beijing Olympics. "Details like the shuttle's speed at different altitudes, the synthetic shuttle's weight being similar to the feather (between 4.74-5.50 grams) and sticking to the same colour are things they need to be careful about. The game is growing so much and the number of geese/ducks required to produce the number of shuttles is enormous. This is the practical way forward."

Though the opinions differ, both Vimal and Anup agree that badminton being a game of delicate touches -- lightning quick reflexes, speed and precision -- the differing behaviour between natural and artificial shuttle will require adjustments.

Vimal also has his apprehensions about manufacturers' claim that the feel and other aspects of synthetic product would be the same. "When an attacking player hits really hard, the synthetic shuttle folds. How will the deceptive strokes and flicks be? Such an experiment was made in the past which didn't get a good response so they shelved that programme."

"Feather shuttles have a natural left to right curve in their flight. Players are used to this movement. Synthetic shuttles might differ slightly, and how they behave when you play these soft delicate spin shots at the net will be the main areas of difference. But otherwise for a block, an attack, defence or clears, I think these synthetic ones are coming surprisingly close to the feather shuttles," Anup shares.

Just to put the numbers in context, there are 12 state-ranking tournaments across various age groups for boys and girls conducted in the state approved by the Karnataka Badminton Association (KBA) in a year. On an average, there are 800-1000 entries with 300-400 tubes of feather birdies (1 tube has 12 shuttles) required per tournament. While Yonex Aerosensa 2 (AS2) is used for qualifying rounds, Aerosensa 30 (AS30) is used in main draw matches.

"Yes, there will obviously be a discussion at our committee meeting. But we haven't received any instructions from the Badminton Association of India (BAI) so far to introduce synthetic ones at our events in Karnataka," says V Muralidhar, KBA honourary secretary.

BWF's latest announcement has surely ruffled some feathers yet again, but the world governing body is determined to take the route of synthetic shuttle.

◆ ON TV ◆

CRICKET

IPL: LSG vs GT (**3:30 pm**), MI vs RCB (**7:30**). **LIVE** on **Star Sports Network, JioHotstar.**

FOOTBALL

EPL: Crystal Palace vs Newcastle United, Sunderland vs Tottenham Hotspur, Nottingham Forest vs Aston Villa (**all 6:30 pm**), Chelsea vs Manchester City (**9:00 pm**). **LIVE** on **Star Sports Select 1, JioHotstar.**

La Liga: Osasuna vs Real Betis (**5:30 pm**), Mallorca vs Vallecano (**7:45 pm**), Celta Vigo vs Real Oviedo (**10:00 pm**). **LIVE** on **FanCode.**

ISL: Inter Kashi vs Mohammedan SC (**5:00 pm**), Mohun Bagan vs Punjab FC (**7:30 pm**). **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Ten 2, FanCode.**

GOLF

Augusta Masters: Round 4 (**10:30 pm**). **LIVE** on **FanCode.**

TENNIS

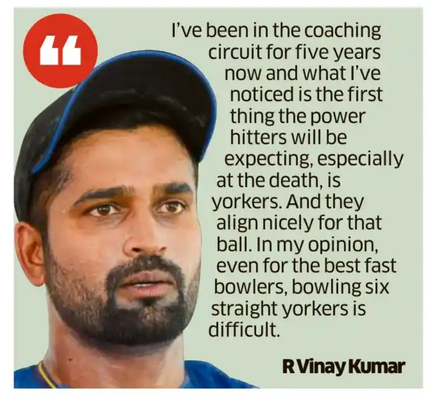
Monte Carlo Masters: Final (**2:30 pm**). **LIVE** on **FanCode.**

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ
ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಪಂಚಾಯಿತಿ, ಚಿಕ್ಕಮಗಳೂರು
ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಆರೋಗ್ಯ ಮತ್ತು ಕುಟುಂಬ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳ ಕಛೇರಿ, ಚಿಕ್ಕಮಗಳೂರು
Email - dhochikmagalur@gmail.com ph :08262-298107
ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ :ಜಿಆಕುಕ:ಸಿವಿ(6)ಟೆಂಡರ್/2026–27 ದಿನಾಂಕ:08–04–2026
: ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ :
ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಆರೋಗ್ಯ ಮತ್ತು ಕುಟುಂಬ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳು, ಚಿಕ್ಕಮಗಳೂರು ಇವರ ಅಧೀನದ ಆರೋಗ್ಯ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳಿಗೆ 2026–27ನೇ ಸಾಲಿಗೆ 166 ಗ್ರೂಪ್ 'ಡಿ' ಹುದ್ದೆಗೆ ಹೊರಸಂಪನ್ಮೂಲದಿಂದ ಒದಗಿಸುವುದಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಅರ್ಹ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳಿಂದ ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ವಿವರಗಳನ್ನು http//eproc.karnataka.gov.in ರಲ್ಲಿ ಪರಿಶೀಲಿಸಿ ಸೂಕ್ತ ದಾಖಲಾತಿಗಳೊಂದಿಗೆ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಬಹುದು. ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಮಾಹಿತಿಗಾಗಿ ಈ ಕೆಳಗೆ ಸಹಿ ಮಾಡಿರುವವರನ್ನು ಕಛೇರಿ ವೇಳೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ.
ಸಹಿ/–
ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಆರೋಗ್ಯ ಮತ್ತು ಕುಟುಂಬ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳು ಚಿಕ್ಕಮಗಳೂರು

BANGALORE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
T. Chowdaiah Road, Kumara Park West, Bengaluru - 560 020
No. BDA/EE(ID)/TEN/216/2025-26 Date: 10.04.2026
CORRIGENDUM
It is hereby notified that, in partial modification of the Tender Notification No.BDA/EM/EE(ID)/TEN/207/2025-26 Dated: 30.03.2026 the following corrigendum is issued with the approval of the Competent Authority:
(1) Change in Name of work: **"Construction of Peripheral Ring Road-1(Bengaluru Business Corridor) Package-1 from Tumakuru Road to Ballari Road (Km 0.00) to (Km 21.00) DBOT mode Inclusive of 10 years O&M". (2)** The Estimated Project Cost is revised from **Rs. 3348.05 Crores to Rs. 3348.00 Crores. (3)** Last date for submission of bids is extended **from 04.05.2026 to 06.05.2026 (4)** Indent Number: BDA/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT237 is revised as BDA/2026-27/RD/WORK_INDENT240. (5) For all other data Refer Gok e-Procurement portal **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**
Helpline / Whatsapp: 9483166622 (24x7) @BDAOfficialGok
Sd/- Executive Engineer, ID and Tender Inviting Authority, BDA, Bengaluru

NEED TO EVOLVE More and more fast bowlers are opting for slower balls and cutters to keep the batters guessing

Variety the key for pacers in brutal format



I've been in the coaching circuit for five years now and what I've noticed is the first thing the power hitters will be expecting, especially at the death, is yorkers. And they align nicely for that ball. In my opinion, even for the best fast bowlers, bowling six straight yorkers is difficult.

R Vinay Kumar

SIDNEY KIRAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

Lasith Malinga is undoubtedly one of the greatest limited-overs bowlers. Apart from his unique round-arm action, what made him such a destructive force in white-ball cricket and a bonafide legend in T20s, especially the IPL, was his ability to deliver those toe-crushing yorkers consistently. Predominantly used as a death bowler, Malinga barely faltered in an illustrious career where his IPL economy rate from 122 games for five-time champions Mumbai Indians is just 7.14 and 7.42 from 84 T20Is for Sri Lanka.

Game after game, no matter how high the pressure was, Malinga terrorised batters with his yorkers and low full tosses that were near impossible to hit because of their low trajectory; the ball arriving from over the stumps at a flattish angle. The Sri Lankan, master of many a win for the Mumbai Indians, was the hero of their fourth title triumph in 2019 when he defended nine runs in the final over against arch-rivals Chennai Super Kings in a pulsating final. CSK had a well-set Shane Watson and Ravindra Jadeja at the crease and were the favourites, but Malinga engineered the impossible, bowling four yorkers and two low full tosses to help MI sneak home by 1 run.

Not just that match, but even before that, the yorker was considered a fast bowler's major weapon while bowling at the death. With the ball old and hardly any swing on offer, and batters looking for the big shot, the yorker was the safest bet to stop the willow-wielders from causing maximum damage. The block-hole delivery is a really tough ball to bowl and takes a lot of practice, but if one can execute it perfectly, it's still the most difficult one to smash for a boundary.

However, the problem with a yorker is its low margin for error. Even if the bowler misses the length by a fraction, it ends up becoming a juicy low full toss or a half-volley — a perfectly wrapped gift for modern-day batters, who can nonchalantly deposit them into the stands. With most of them, who practice range-hitting consistently at the 'nets', sitting deep in their crease and waiting for those balls in their arc, a yorker gone wrong can spell doom for the bowlers.

Going by the evidence during the recently-concluded T20 World Cup and in the ongoing IPL, bowlers too have evolved like batters have. Sensing that batters lie in wait for a wrongly executed yorker or a length ball hurled at the usual pace, bowlers have figured that one way to counter them is by taking the pace off the ball. They know it's hard to bowl six yorkers right at the same spot, so the only way out is to mix things up. Slower balls, cutters, knuckle balls, back of a length deliveries or even slow bouncers are ways to surprise a batter.

Take the game between Gujarat Giants and Delhi Capitals on April 8, for instance. Tasked with defending 13 runs off the final over with DC's David Miller and Vipraj Nigam on the charge, GT's Prasidh Krishna tried the length ball to Nigam, who effortlessly smashed it for a boundary. Prasidh exacted revenge by dismissing Nigam the very next ball, conceded a single then to Kuldeep Yadav, and missed his length off the fourth ball to Miller. The South African, waiting like a predator, smashed it for a six to bring the equation down to 2 off 2. Prasidh then surprised Miller but with a short ball, but the southpaw, despite connecting, refused to take a single that would have tied the game. Miller desired to be the hero, but Prasidh yet again surprised the fearsome hitter with a slower bouncer, which he missed. GT sneaked home one-run winners after non-striker Kuldeep Yadav was run out.

Lucknow Super Giants' Mohammed Shami, known for swing bowling, too, has embraced variety to show how integral it is for a bowler to be successful in a format where scores over 200 are breached often and talk is of 300 even in high-profile games. Against Sunrisers Hyderabad, opening the bowling, Shami started off with three yorkers that caught Travis Head by surprise. The fourth ball was a slower ball, something which Shami doled out abundantly to finish with incredible figures of 4-0-9-2 against a side that possesses one of the most fearsome batting line-ups.

"Having all kinds of varieties in your armoury is good," former Karnataka captain and India pacer R Vijay Kumar told DHoS. "Back of the length deliveries, it has always been a weapon, because that will be the least expected ball, especially at the death. I've been in the coaching circuit for five years now and what I've noticed is the first thing the power hitters will be expecting, especially at the death, is yorkers. And they align nicely for that ball. In my opinion, even for the best fast bowlers, bowling six straight yorkers is difficult. They may miss two. That'll end up becoming full tosses or half-volleys. Batters are even prepared for the wide yorker, giving themselves room and slogging it over covers.

"Nowadays, bats are really good and the power-hitters are extremely strong. They practice six hitting, especially the tall batters, and a slight miss from the bowlers means six. So by keeping all that in mind, I think that hard length definitely is a very good option. To be a successful fast bowler, the key is to keep the batter guessing. Varieties in bowling and playing with field placements have to go hand in hand."

Delhi Capitals' Kyle Jamieson echoed Vinay's thoughts. "The game has moved forward a lot, especially from a batting perspective. Scores are getting higher. The key is not to move away from your strengths. You can get caught trying to do too much, which plays into the batter's hands. You're trying to mix pace, bounce, and movement, and structure your overs so batters can't predict what's coming. If they know what's coming, you're not in the game anymore.

"Batters have become very good at playing yorkers. If you miss slightly, you don't get away with it anymore. The margin for error is very small. So you see more use of slower balls and deception in the air. Bowlers are trying to disrupt timing and force batters to think something different is coming. That gives you a chance to use yorkers more effectively."

As bats evolve along with batters, and pitches become flatter than ever in T20s, bowlers too have to keep reinventing themselves to stay relevant in a format that's skewed heavily on one side. And having more arsenal in one's armoury helps stay in the game.

Prasidh Krishna

Jasprit Bumrah

Mohammed Shami

Eliminator clinches Stewards Cup (Div I)

DELHI RESULTS

Rajinder-trained Eliminator, ridden by Lave Kumar, won the Stewards Cup (Div I), the feature event of the races here on Saturday.

1. Samrat Plate – 1000M: Ashwa Jubilee (Sameer Qureshi) 1; Gamati (Angand) 2; Juggaad (K Narender) 3; Truth And Dare (Faizan Hhan) 4; WB: 1/2, Shd, 5 1/2L. T: 1:01.37. TB:Irfan Ali. Fav: Juggaad.

2. Raj Tilak Plate – 1600M: Ashwa Changez (K Nazil) 1; Dubai Falcon (Varun) 2; Attenborough (Akash Rajput) 3; Bigg Tymer (Ankit Pal) 4; WB: hd, 1 1/4, 5 1/4L. T:1:43.97. TB: S Nawab. Fav: Ashwa Changez.

3. Rajsi Vaibhav Plate – 1400M: Trusted Friend (Arjun) 1; Black Rainstorm (Faizan Khan) 2; Miss Berg (Anga) 3; Poly Czar (Mohit Singh) 4; WB: 4, Nk, Nk. T: 1:26.24. TB: S M Abbas Fav: Lady Danger.

4. Stewards Cup (Div I) - 1000M: Eliminator (Lave Kumar) 1; Big Decision (Kundan Paswan) 2; Ashwa Kohima (Vishal) 3; Hukamori (Arjun) 4; WB: 1 1/4, 1 3/4, 3/4L. T: 0:58.74. TB: Rajinder. Fav: Ashwa Kohima.

5. Stewards Cup (Div II) - 1000M: Ashwa Simran (Vishal) 1; Lodge Keeper (Jai Parkash) 2; Golden Sun (Aasif Khan) 3; Galway Bay (Angad) 4; WB: 4 1/2, 3/4, 5 3/4L. T: 0:58.52 TB: S Nawab Fav: Ashwa Simran.

6. Shahi Darbar Plate – 1100M: Rocket Rod (Vishal) 1; Nairobi (Shivam) 2; First Class (Dhanu S Deora) 3; Bahadur (K Narender) 4; WB: 1/2, 2 1/4, 1L. T: 1:06.40. TB: R Kumar. Fav: Rocket Rod.

Bengaluru dividends:
I race: Rs 54w; Rs21, 11p; Shp: Rs 14; Thp: Rs 56; Fc: Rs 322; Q: Rs 105; Tri: Rs 150 & 51; Exp: Rs 304 & 356.
II race: Rs 14w; Rs13, 15p; Shp: Rs 26; Thp: Rs 23; Fc: Rs 39; Q: Rs 23; Tri: Rs 42; 21; Exp: Rs 118 & 100.
III race: Rs 82w; Rs20, 24, 38p; Shp: Rs 77; Thp: Rs 101; Fc: Rs 836; Q: Rs 610; Tri: Rs C/O; Exp: Rs C/o.
IV race: Rs 69w; Rs16, 21, 14p; Shp: Rs 50; Thp: Rs 50; Fc: Rs 307; Q: Rs 190; Tri: Rs 802; 229; Exp: Rs 2661 & 1425.
V race: Rs 15w; Rs10, 45p; Shp: Rs 56; Thp: Rs 26; Fc: Rs 294; Q: Rs 112; Tri: Rs 122 & 34; Exp: Rs 468 & 252.
VI race: Rs 17w; Rs10, 18, 14p; Shp: Rs 40; Thp: Rs 37; Fc: Rs 55; Q: Rs 37; Tri: Rs 205 & 49; Exp: Rs 412 &;236.
Jackpot: 2,606 & 460; **Treble**: 260

FOOTBALL EPL

Arsenal title hopes suffer

Everton grab late draw at Brentford; Brighton beat Burnley 2-0

LONDON, AFP

Arsenal's 2-1 home defeat by Bournemouth on Saturday blew the Premier League title race wide open, as Brentford and Everton missed the chance to close in on Champions League qualification after a 2-2 draw.

The Gunners could have opened up a 12-point lead at the top of the table, but a third defeat in four games for Mikel Arteta's men has put the destiny of the title back in Manchester City's hands.

City have two games in hand on the leaders, starting with Sunday's trip to Chelsea, and host Arsenal next weekend.

Just a few weeks ago Arsenal were dreaming of an unprecedented quadruple.

But after losing to City in the League Cup final and being dumped out the FA Cup by second-tier Southampton, a first league title in 22 years may also now be slipping away.

"We were very far from the standards that we've shown all season, so it's a big punch in the face because we wanted to win this game so badly," said Arteta.

Alex Scott celebrates after scoring Bournemouth's winner against Arsenal at the Emirates Stadium on Saturday. AFP

"We didn't cope with the situations when they didn't go our way."

Junior Kroupi reacted quickest to Adrien Truffert's deflected cross to give Bournemouth an early lead.

Viktor Gyokeres levelled before the break from the penalty spot, but a lack of creative spark in the final third was again Arsenal's undoing.

It is their defensive record that has put Arteta's men in pole position for the title, but they were cut open with ease when Alex Scott finished off a fine team move for the winner on 74 minutes.

The result was also huge in Bournemouth's charge towards the European places as they move up to 10th on the back of an 11-game unbeaten run.

Five English sides will qualify directly for next season's Champions League and both Brentford and Everton missed the chance to move level on points with fifth-placed Liverpool.

Twice the Bees led through Igor Thiago, who took his tally for the season to 21 Premier League goals and within one of Erling Haaland in the race for the Golden Boot.

Beto levelled midway through the first half for the visitors and Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall struck in stoppage time to salvage a point.

Brighton are also well in the mix for their first ever taste of Champions League football.

Results: Arsenal: 1 (Gyokeres 35th) lt to Bournemouth: 2 (Kroupi 17th, Scott 74th); Brentford: 2 (Thiago 3rd pen, 76th) drew with Everton: 2 (Beto 26th, Dewsbury-Hall 90th+1); Burnley: 0 lt to Brighton: 2 (Wieffer 43rd, 89th).

K'taka's Shailesh grabs top spot

BENGALURU, DHNS

Karnataka athletes had much to cheer about at the Indian Athletics Series 3 as they bagged multiple podium spots in the one-day event, including a top-spot finish by long-distance runner Shailesh Kushwaha in the men's 1000m final in New Delhi on Saturday.

Shailesh, who trains at SAI Bengaluru, recorded a personal best of 30:01.08 as he competed in the event after a gap of almost two years.

Meanwhile, the state's sprinters SS Sneha and Unnathi Aiyappa bagged the silver medals in the women's 100m and 200m events respectively.

Sneha, who opened her 2026 season, clocked 11.63 seconds in a close final with Telangana athlete Nithya Gandhe (11.59).

Unnathi (24.12), meanwhile, couldn't outrun Police's Priyanka Sikarwar (23.91) in the fastest women's 200m race of the day.

Women's 400m runner Priya Mohan, representing JSW, took third spot at 54.24 in her event while Namayi Ruchitha (Anju Bobby Sports Foundation) clocked 14.00 in the women's 100m hurdles for a third place too.

Meanwhile, Hima Das' return to her forte 400m event in six years ended with an off-colour show of 57.92 , which more than seven seconds slower than her national record of 50.79. She also was unimpressive in the 200m.

Shailesh Kushwaha

Results: Winners and Karnataka only: Men: 100m: Animesh Kujur (Odi) 10.28s. **110m hurdles:** Muhammed Lazan (JSW) 14.23. 200m: Animesh Kujur (Odi) 20.74. **400m hurdles:** Santhosh Kumar T (TN) 51.19. **800m:** Anu Kumar (Utt) 1:49.87. **1000m:** Shailesh Kushwaha (Kar) 30.01.08. **Discus throw:** Abhimanyu (JSW) 56.75m. **Long jump:** Md Atta Sazid (Har) 7.86. **Hammer throw:** Damneet Singh (Rel) 67.74.
U-20: 110m hurdles: Kiran K (Ker) 13.80s. 400m: Astik Pradhan (Odi) 46.61. 200m: Abhishek Singh Naruk (Raj) 21.69.
Women: 100m: Nithya Gandhe (NCOT) 11.59s, 1; SS Sneha (Kar) 11.63, 2. **100m hurdles:** Anjali C (JSW) 13.58, 1; Namayi Ruchitha (ABSF) 14.00, 3. **200m:** Priyanka Sikarwar (Pol) 23.91, 1; Unnathi Aiyappa (Kar) 24.12. **400m:** Rashdeep Kaur (Pun) 53.10, 1; Priya HM (JSW) 54.24, 3. **400m hurdles:** Gudiya (UP) 59.23. **800m:** Astha Mallick (Del) 2:11.79. **1000m:** Balbli Verma (UP) 35:08.20. **Discus throw:** Seema (NCOP) 59.55m. Long jump: Shaili Singh (UP) 6.24. **Triple jump:** Niharika Vashisht (Pun) 13.41. **Shot put:** Shiksha (Rel) 16.50.
U-20: 400m: Bhumi Singh (Del) 57.27. **Javelin throw:** Poonam (JSW) 49.35.

Indian challenge ends in quarters

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Indian challenge ended in the quarterfinals of the Asian Heyball Open in Shah Alam, Malaysia, on Saturday.

While Shivam Arora went down 2-7 to Mongolia's Lagnaidorj Delgerdalai, Keerthana Pandian and Amee Kamani lost to France's Marion Jude (4-3 on time) and Waratthanun Sukritthanes of Thailand (6-1) in the women's section.

Results: (Indians unless mentioned): Asian Heyball Open: Quarters: Lagnaidorj Delgerdalai (Mgl) bt Shivam Arora 7-2.
Pre-quarters: Shivam bt Kyle Akaloo (RSA) 7-6; Delgerdalai bt Sundeep Gulati 7-4.
Women: Quarters: Waratthanun Sukritthanes (Tha) bt Amee Kamani 6-1; Marion Jude (Fra) bt Keerthana Pandian 4-3 (on time).
Pre-quarters: Amee bt Vidya Pillai 5-3 (on time); Keerthana bt Nicola Rossouw (RSA) 5-4 (on time).

Aadhya shines in Rajmahal BC win

BENGALURU, DHNS: Aadhya shone the brightest by scoring 27 points for Rajmahal BC during their 61-45 victory over Appaiah BC in an upper pool super league game of the 2nd State Women's Basketball League Championship at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Saturday.

LOCAL BASKETBALL

Results: Rajmahal BC: 61 (Aadhya 27, Shreya 16) bt Appaiah BC: 45 (Hiranmayi 10). HT: 20-28; Beagles BC: 57 (Sanjana 22, Swathi 12) bt Young Orion's SC: 52 (Sarayu 14, Bindu 12). HT: 28-23; Bangalore Vanguards: 54 (Suhaavi 14, Charvya 11) bt Vivek's SC: 39 (Jeyashree 12). HT: 29-21; Mounts Club: 49 (Pallavi 14) bt Mysore District A: 48 (Sanika 19). HT: 16-23; DYES Vidyanagar: 69 (Nireeksha 15, Deepika 14) bt Vimanapura SC: 53 (Shreya 17, Samyukta 14). HT: 35-23; Young Orion's: 60 (Bindu 13) bt Appaiah BC: 23 (Shruthi 9). HT: 36-12; Beagles BC: 67 (Aadhya 22, Chandana 20) bt Rajmahal BC: 37 (Sejal 16). HT: 46-18; DYES Vidyanagar: 62 (Ishitha 20, Deepika 17) bt Vivek's SC: 42 (Jeyashree 19). HT: 32-18; Bangalore Vanguards: 63 (Priyanka 19, Prashitha 17) bt Vimanapura SC: 57 (Shwetha 22, Samyukta 12). HT: 31-20.

Sekar, Arthi clinch titles

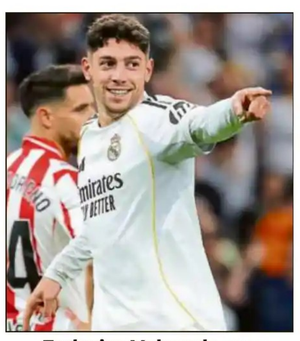
NEW DELHI, PTI: Sekar Patchai continued his dominance in stand-up paddling as he clinched the men's Technical SUP title while Arthi emerged victorious in the Women's category in the Little Andaman Pro on Saturday.

Properly Posh for main event

DELHI SELECTIONS

Ajay Sharma-trained Properly Posh, to be ridden by Arjun, is fancied to win the DRC President Cup Div I, the feature event of the races on Sunday. The first race starts at 2:45 pm.

1. The Tej Tarang Plate (Div I) – 1000M: She's A Beauty 1, Trending Cruise 2, Emperor Ashoka 3.
2. The Tej Tarang Plate (Div II) – 1000M: Beat Goes On 1, Chieftain 2, Lady Hitman 3.
3.The Udaan Shakti Plate – 1200M: Mighty 1, Nizbati Wings 2, Master Bomber 3.
4. The DRC President Cup (Div I) – 1200M: Properly Posh 1, Master Multitude 2, Big Daddy 3.
5. The DRC President Cup (Div II) – 1200M: Ashwa Manslu 1, Ticker 2, Missey Boy 3.
6. The Vijay Dhwaj Plate – 1100M: Thanks Again 1, Elite 2, Ashwa Denali 3.
Day's Best: Ashwa Manslu.
Jackpot: 2, 3, 4,5 & 6.
Treble: 4, 5, 6.



Federico Valverde. AFP

Real Madrid drop crucial points

MADRID, AP

Jude Bellingham's first start since February 1 was not enough to spark a Real Madrid revival as they drew with Girona 1-1 and missed a chance to put pressure on La Liga leaders Barcelona.

Bellingham was withdrawn after 10 minutes in a game against Rayo Vallecano and subsequently missed nine club matches, including the twin victories over Manchester City that took Real Madrid into the Champions League quarterfinals.

He made three substitute appearances in Madrid's previous three games but started against Girona in a fixture the home side needed to win to cut into Barcelona's seven-point lead.

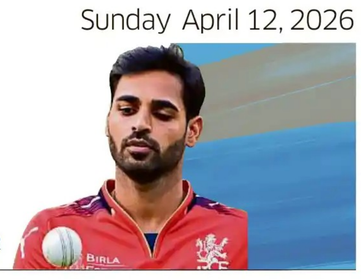
Instead, Madrid ended the night ruing missed opportunities.

Result: Real Madrid: 1 (Valverde 51st) drew with Girona: 1 (Lemar 62nd)

10 TEAMS 13 VENUES 58 DAYS 74 MATCHES

"The way he is hitting shots. He is not slogging, he is hitting proper shots. For a 15-year-old, he is too mature. So yes, I think we should give him credit for the way he is batting.

BHUVNESHWAR KUMAR, RCB PACER



Capt Shreyas cooks up a classic

Prabhsimran, Priyansh shine too as PBKS seal 6-wkt win over SRH

MULLANPUR, PTI

Shreyas Iyer once again proved his worth as a leader and a batter, guiding Punjab Kings to a commanding six-wicket victory over Sunrisers Hyderabad in an Indian Premier League match here on Saturday.

After an astute piece of captaincy, Shreyas led by example with an unbeaten 69 off 33 balls to help PBKS chase down a daunting target of 220 with as many as seven balls to spare.

The foundation for the victory was laid by a rollicking 99-run opening stand between Priyansh Arya (57 off 20 balls) and Prabhsimran Singh (51 of 25), after Abhishek Sharma unleashed a brutal onslaught with a blistering 28-ball 74 to power SRH to 219 for six.

Sent in, Abhishek and Travis Head (38 off 23 balls) blew away the PBKS bowlers with a 120-run opening partnership in a mere 8.1 overs. The home team though made a fine comeback with the ball after Shashank Singh (2/20 in 3 overs) removed both openers in one over and, as a result, SRH, who were 120 for no loss at the start of ninth over, ended inside 220.

Xavier Bartlett (1/42 in 4 overs) bowled a brilliant final over to concede just five runs.

Abhishek smashed eight sixes and five fours.

In reply, PBKS got the start they needed and raced to 93 for no loss in the powerplay, with the opening duo of Priyansh and Prabhsimran going hammer and tongs at the SRH bowlers.

Left-arm spinner Harsh Dubey leaked 18 runs in the first over, providing PBKS with the perfect launch pad.

Prabhsimran danced down the ground to get a couple of sixes, including one against veteran left-arm seamer Jaydev Unadkat, even as Eshan Malinga gave away 17 runs.

Priyansh then hammered Harshal Patel for 6, 6, 4, 4 to race to a 16-ball fifty.

Shivang Kumar raised SRH hopes by picking three wickets but Shreyas completed the job for his side.

Earlier, Abhishek got off the blocks quickly and launched into Arshdeep to collect 24 runs with the help of two fours and two maximums including a straight six and another off a top edge over third man.

Marco Jansen, too, was taken to the cleaners with 16 runs in the left-arm quick's first over as SRH reached 60 for no loss in four overs.

Abhishek reached his half-century in 18 balls with a six over long-on off a Vyshak Vijaykumar slower ball, and two balls later, a low full toss was lofted over long-on for another maximum to signal the end of another 24-run over, which propelled SRH to 84 for no loss in five overs, the best powerplay score at this venue.

Abhishek enjoyed registering his first half-century of the season and received a hug from Head, before the two resumed their power hitting.

Bartlett came back but the onslaught continued unabated as Head struck three consecutive boundaries and Abhishek pummelled one over deep midwicket for a maximum to bring up SRH's 100 inside the powerplay.

Shreyas Iyer scored an unbeaten 33-ball 69 to help Punjab Kings beat Sunrisers Hyderabad by six wickets in Mullanpur on Saturday. PTI

SCOREBOARD

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD: Abhishek Sharma c Arshdeep b Shashank 74, Travis Head c Bartlett b Shashank 38, Ishan Kishan c Jansen b Arshdeep 27, Aniket Verma run out Stoinis 18, Salil Arora c Bartlett b Arshdeep 9, Nitish Kumar Reddy (not out) 0, Harsh Dubey (not out) 1. Extras (W-11, NB-1, B-1) 13. **TOTAL (for 6 wkts, 20 overs) 219.** **Fall of wickets:** 1-120, 2-122, 3-169, 4-195, 5-214, 6-218. **Bowling:** Arshdeep Singh 4-0-50-2, Xavier Bartlett 4-0-42-1, Marco Jansen 4-0-40-0, Vysakh Vijayakumar 2-0-33-0, Shashank Singh 3-0-20-2, Yuzvendra Chahal 3-0-33-0.

PUNJAB KINGS: Priyansh Arya c Nitish b Shivang 57, Prabhsimran c Klaasen b Shivang 51, Connolly c Aniket b Shivang 11, Shreyas Iyer (not out) 69, Nehal Wadhera b Harsh 14, Shashank Singh (not out) 16. Extras (W-5) 5. **TOTAL (for 4 wkts, 18.5 overs) 223. Fall of wickets:** 1-99, 2-117, 3-128, 4-197. **Bowling:** Harsh Dubey 4-0-38-1, Jaydev Unadkat 3-0-40-0, Eshan Malinga 3-0-46-0, Harshal Patel 2-0-39-0, Shivang Kumar 4-0-33-3, Nitish Kumar Reddy 2-0-20-0, Abhishek Sharma 0.5-0-7-0. **Result:** PBKS won by 6 wkts. **PoM:** Shreyas Iyer.

B'luru look to bounce back against Mumbai

Hosts seek home comfort after two successive defeats on the road

G KRISHNAN
MUMBAI

The two iconic Indian cricketers in the last decade or so -- Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli -- will square off against each other yet again at the Wankhede Stadium on Sunday night with no quarter asked, none given.

They are now in that phase of their careers where they are guiding youngsters as living examples while also opening the innings and batting with freedom, relieved of the leadership mantle.

Mumbai Indians versus Royal Challengers Bengaluru is one of the most anticipated matches and one that every cricket fan wants to be a part of. There is no dearth of excitement, drama, emotions and action. The rivalry is storied, but MI are slightly ahead in terms of head to head equation, having won 19 of the 34 matches against RCB across 18 editions.

This year, both have had mixed results so far, RCB winning two and losing to Rajasthan Royals in Guwahati on Friday with teen sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi leading the charge.

Kohli apart, the RCB have been well served by captain Rajat Patidar, the left-handed No. 3 Devdutt Padikkal who has been in roaring form for a while and the six-hitter Tim David, who will be up against a team where he gained his foothold in this league between 2022 and 2024.

Perhaps, the only concern for Patidar with his top-order would their explosive opener Phil Salt yet to set the stage afire barring the 46 against CSK in the second match.

Despite the league becoming more and more batting heavy, RCB do have the wherewithal to contain the opposition, boosted by the arrival of Australian Josh Hazlewood, who was at the receiving end of Sooryavanshi. The bowlers in their entirety cannot be blamed for higher economy rate, such being the nature of today's T20.

Skipper Rajat Patidar (142 runs) is currently the leading run-scorer for Royal Challengers Bengaluru. AFP

LIVE 7.30 PM

At the bottom

MI are dwelling at the bottom half of the table after drawing blank in their two matches on the road, losing to Delhi Capitals and Royals after beginning with a convincing win against Kolkata Knight Riders two Sundays ago here.

With Jasprit Bumrah being the lone MI bowler to continue to pose a threat to the opposition, it is difficult to fathom he is yet to pick up a wicket this IPL.

But, MI aren't sweating over this as they believe "sometimes the best form of attack is defence," as their batting coach Kieron Pollard said on Saturday. MI are happy with his economy rate of eight. However, they are fretting over Will Jacks's absence and "are expecting him to be fit very soon".

MI have been celebrating Rohit's 15 years' presence with them. Back in their fortress, the five-time winners are looking at the crucial two points. As Pollard put it, "This is IPL, all contests are spicy. The main thing is two points at play. We don't look too much into the opposition".

Easier said than done!

LSG look to ride the momentum

LUCKNOW, PTI

Lucknow Super Giants may have unearthed a new star in Mukul Choudhary, but their poor home record remains a major concern as they host Gujarat Titans in their Indian Premier League clash here on Sunday.

LIVE 3.30 PM

Both teams head into the contest on the back of morale-boosting away wins.

GT sealed a thrilling one-run victory over Delhi Capitals for their first win of the season, while LSG registered two impressive wins on the road against Sunrisers Hyderabad and Kolkata Knight Riders.

However, LSG have struggled to turn the Ekana Cricket Stadium into a fortress.

They lost six of their eight matches here last season, including five in a row, en route to a seventh-place finish, and overall, have managed just nine wins from 22 games at the venue.

This season too, they started with a batting collapse at home, getting bowled out for 141 in the six-wicket loss to DC.

With this being only their second home game this year, LSG will be desperate to set the record straight.

The team, though, will not be short on confidence after back-to-back away wins.

The last outing against KKR was particularly special, marking the emergence of a new 'finisher' in Mukul.

The unheralded 21-year-old from Rajasthan lit up the stage with a stunning six-hitting display, powered by lightning bat speed and a wide range of strokes, including the trademark helicopter shot of his idol, MS Dhoni, to emerge as the latest IPL sensation.

Another positive is the return to form of Ayush Badoni, who struck a half-century against KKR to set up the chase.

Badoni being among runs adds depth to an already formidable top-five featuring Mitchell Marsh, Aiden Markram, skipper Rishabh Pant and Nicholas Pooran.

With this being an afternoon match, the contest against Gujarat's spin duo of Rashid Khan and Washington Sundar on a surface expected to be slow and offer variable bounce could prove decisive.

Rashid has been back to his best in the previous game against DC, returning with Player-of-the-Match figures of 3/17 that made the difference in their one-run win.

Amid criticism that opposition batters had begun to decode his variations, Rashid responded strongly with a vintage display in the middle overs, with his wickets including that of Sameer Rizvi.

POINTS TABLE

Team	Played	Won	Lost	NR	Pts	NRR
Rajasthan Royals	4	4	0	0	8	2.055
Punjab Kings	4	3	0	1	7	0.720
Royal Challengers	3	2	1	0	4	1.231
Delhi Capitals	4	2	2	0	4	0.322
Lucknow Super Giants	3	2	1	0	4	-0.359
Sunrisers Hyderabad	4	1	3	0	2	-0.024
Gujarat Titans	3	1	2	0	2	-0.270
Mumbai Indians	3	1	2	0	2	-0.715
Chennai Super Kings	4	1	3	0	2	-1.532
Kolkata Knight Riders	4	0	3	1	1	-1.315

Ton-up Samson steers CSK to season's first win

CHENNAI, PTI

After three silent outings, Sanju Samson rediscovered his batting range with a fabulous hundred and bowlers' fangs regrew as Chennai Super Kings defeated Delhi Capitals by 23 runs to register their first win of IPL 2026 here on Saturday.

Samson (115 not out, 56 balls) and Ayush Mhatre (59, 36 balls) milked 113 runs for the second wicket to power CSK to a competitive 212 for two and the Delhi Capitals stumbled against Jamie Overton's superb spell (4/18) to get bundled out for 189.

Tristan Stubbs (60) delayed the inevitable for DC with a gutsy half-century.

While it was the super Kings' first win of the season, the Capitals slumped to their second defeat in a row.

Chasing 213, Delhi made a bold start, making 61 in just five overs through a fine stand between openers KL Rahul and Pathum Nissanka (41).

But the dismissal of Nissanka took some steam away from DC. Nissanka, whose catch was grassed by Khaleel Ahmed off Anshul Kamboj, could not use the let off as he spooned the next ball off the pacer to Dewald Brevis at the edge of the circle.

At 61 for two in 5.2 overs, DC were still in a good position but the Chennai bowlers redrafted their strategy at this stage.

Their pacers -- Overton, Khaleel and Kamboj -- began to bash the ball into the red-soil surface and extracted good bounce, cramping the DC batters for space to execute their shots effectively.

Sameer Rizvi and Axar Patel fell to such deliveries, and Sarfaraz Khan played a big role in the latter's dismissal with a tremendous full-length diving catch at point.

Chennai Super Kings' Sanju Samson celebrates his century against Delhi Capitals at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Saturday. PTI

SCOREBOARD

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS: Sanju Samson (not out) 115, Ruturaj Gaikwad c Pathum Nissanka b Axar Patel 15, Ayush Mhatre (retd out) 59, Shivam Dube (not out) 20. Extras (W-3) 3. **TOTAL (For 2 wkts, 20 Overs) 212.** **Fall of wickets:** 1-62, 2-175. **Bowling:** Auqib Nabi Dar 2-0-17-0, Mukesh Kumar 4-0-37-0, Axar Patel 4-0-39-1, T Natarajan 4-0-54-0, Lungi Ngidi 4-0-41-0, Kuldeep Yadav 2-0-24-0.

DELHI CAPITALS: Pathum Nissanka c Brevis b Kamboj 41, KL Rahul c Overton b Khaleel 18, Sameer Rizvi c Brevis b Overton 6, Axar Patel c Sarfaraz b Gurjapneet 1, David Miller b Overton 17, Stubbs c Noor b Overton 60, Ashutosh Sharma c Kamboj b Noor 19, Auqib Nabi Dar c Hosein b Overton 4, Kuldeep Yadav c Brevis b Kamboj 4, Ngidi c Gurjapneet b Kamboj 3, T Natarajan (not out) 1. Extras: (LB-1, W-11, NB-3) 15. **TOTAL (all out, 20 overs) 189.** **Fall of wickets:** 1-61, 2-61, 3-66, 4-76, 5-121, 6-149, 7-154, 8-183, 9-185. **Bowling:** Akeal Hosein 2-0-20-0, Khaleel Ahmed 3-0-40-1, Anshul Kamboj 4-0-35-3, Gurjapneet Singh 4-0-39-1, Jamie Overton 4-0-18-4, Noor Ahmad 3-0-36-1. **Result:** CSK won by 23 runs. **PoM:** Sanju Samson.

Sainyam ends in fifth place

NEW DELHI, PTI: Indian shooter Sainyam, a former junior world and Asian champion, recorded her best ever finish at an ISSF World Cup leg, claiming a creditable fifth place in the women's 10m air pistol final in Granada, Spain.

Sainyam shot 178.9 in the final. Reigning Asian Games champion Palak also made the final and finished seventh.

KSBA C team, winners of the BC Ananthasayanam inter-club billiards and snooker tournament conducted by KSBA. (From left) Ravi Rudramurthy, Viswanath, Mahesh Adhitya, Raju Hari, Satish Kumar.

India out of World Group Play-off race despite win

NEW DELHI, PTI: A fearless Vaishnavi Adkar rose to the occasion with an inspiring win over higher-ranked Sohyun Park, leading India to a 2-1 win over South Korea after Ankita Raina's defeat to Dayeon Back ended the hosts' hopes of making the Billie Jean King Cup World Group Play-offs, here on Saturday.

Placed fourth in the standings at the start of the day, India needed a 3-0 sweep against Korea to stay in contention for a top-two finish. Captain Vishal Uppal fielded his most experienced campaigner Ankita in the opening singles, but Dayeon quelled the home challenge, handing India a setback.

The 33-year-old Ankita, ranked 581, fought hard after a slow start against the 343rd-ranked Korean but eventually went down 1-6, 5-7 in one hour and 55 minutes. She had not featured in singles prior to this tie, having played only doubles in the tournament.

India's No. 1 Vaishnavi then kept the contest alive, producing a gritty 7-6(2) 7-6(5) win over Park, who is ranked 107 places above her at 276.

Ankita and Rutuja Bhosale concluded India's campaign with a 6-2, 6-2 win against Dayeon Back and Eunhye Lee in the tie-deciding doubles rubber.

With a fourth-place finish, India stayed in the Asia/Oceania Group I along with third-placed Thailand. Indonesia and Korea qualified for the World Group Play-offs after finishing one and two respectively.

Atiqa is No. 1 in female karting

LONATO (ITALY), PTI: Indian racing prodigy Atiqa Mir has emerged as the highest-ranked female in the latest FIA International Kart Ranking (IKR) in her category, marking a milestone moment in her fast-rising career.

The 11-year-old is placed in seventh overall position in the International OK-NJ class (age 12-14), making her the highest-ranked female racer in the rankings calculated by the motorsport's world governing body FIA. The rankings are led by Zoltan Coigny of Switzerland.

Atiqa, who is the first Indian to be supported by Formula 1 Academy, was fast-tracked into the Junior category (age 12-14) from the mini class (8-12) at the start of 2026, considering her special talent.

Atiqa Mir

Composed McIlroy rolls ahead of chasing pack

AUGUSTA (USA), AFP

Rory McIlroy's astonishing finish to grab a Masters record six-stroke lead after 36 holes remained the talk of Augusta National as Saturday's third round began.

The 36-year-old from Northern Ireland birdied six of the last seven holes, including the final four, to seize command on Friday as rivals struggled to find words worthy of the spectacular feat.

"Rory played great, made the most of pretty much everything he could out there and that's what it takes to be beating the field by six," world No. 3 Cameron Young said after playing alongside McIlroy.

Defending champion McIlroy fired a seven-under par 65 to stand on 12-under 132 halfway into the year's first major tournament, where he hopes to match Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus and Nick Faldo as the only back-to-back winners of the green jacket.

"Rory may never lose this thing again," 1992 Masters winner Fred Couples said on Thursday after McIlroy shared the lead on 67.

Second-ranked McIlroy solved Amen Corner's formidable par-three 12th and par-five 13th holes for birdies, then closed with a 29-yard chip in at 17 and a six-foot putt at 18 for epic Masters history.

Americans Patrick Reed and Sam Burns shared second on six-under 138 entering the third round with Irishman Shane Lowry and England's Justin Rose and Tommy Fleetwood seven adrift on 139.

McIlroy will try to solidify his grip on the green jacket when he tees off alongside Burns in Saturday's final pairing at 2:50 pm (1850 GMT), 11 minutes after Rose and Reed get started.

Leading scores (after 36 holes): 132: Rory McIlroy (NIR) 67-65; **138:** Patrick Reed (US) 69-69, Sam Burns (US) 67-71; **139:** Tommy Fleetwood (Eng) 71-68, Shane Lowry (Irl) 70-69, Justin Rose (Eng) 70-69.

USA's Patrick Reed carded a second-straight 3-under 69 to be T-2 behind leader Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland after round 2 of the Masters in Augusta, Georgia, on Friday. REUTERS

Karnataka's Tanishka bags doubles gold

SHIMLA, PTI: Indian paddlers underlined their regional dominance, winning 13 gold medals across categories at the South Asian Youth Table Tennis Championships here on Saturday. The tournament is also a qualifier for the Asian Youth Championships.

Karnataka's Tanishka Kalbhairav paired up with Sreejani Chakraborty to win the girls' U-15 doubles final against Nepal's Arsana Maharjan and Suramya Shakya 14-16, 11-5, 11-5, 11-4.

Results: Finals: Boys: U-19: **Singles:** Priyanuj Bhattacharyya (Ind) bt Punit Biswas (Ind) 11-7, 6-11, 11-7, 11-6; **Doubles:** MR Balamurugan/Mehan Senthil (Ind) bt Abul Hsib/Nafiz Iqbal (Ban) 9-11, 11-7, 11-4, 11-5. **U-15: Singles:** Aditya Das (Ind) bt Akshay Kirikara (Ind) 11-6, 11-6, 11-6; **Doubles:** Rishaan Chattopadhyay/Akash Rajavelu (Ind) bt Reevan Bajracharya/Nischal Thapa (Nep) 8-11, 13-11, 9-11, 11-1, 11-4. **Girls: U-19: Singles:** Jennifer Varghese (Ind) bt Ananya Muralidharan (Ind) 7-11, 11-9, 11-8, 11-6; **Doubles:** Prisha Goel/Ditsa Roy (Ind) bt Binaca Rai/Evaana Thapa (Nep) 11-5, 11-9, 13-11. **U-15: Singles:** Ankolika Chakraborty (Ind) bt Aahona Ray (Ind) 12-10, 15-13, 8-11, 11-5; **Doubles:** Sreejani Chakraborty/Tanishka Kalbhairav (Ind) bt Arsana Maharjan/Suramya Shakya (Nep) 14-16, 11-5, 11-5, 11-4.

Blood, oil and hubris: The unforgivable wars of our time

ROVING REFLECTIONS

Capt G R Gopinath (Retd.)
builds bridges, sometimes by tearing down walls. He is a soldier, farmer, and entrepreneur

"Here's the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand..."

Lady Macbeth's line could well be written today for two men: Benjamin Netanyahu and Donald Trump, twin faces of a brutal, unrelenting order that has reduced morality to rubble, along with cities. Netanyahu already stands indicted before the International Court of Justice for alleged genocide in Gaza. Yet the war has only widened and deepened. The targeted assassination of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, along with senior Iranian officials, marks a dangerous escalation into outright decapitation warfare. Add to this the relentless bombardment of civilian infrastructure: homes, hospitals, and schools. In Lebanon, under the pretext of targeting Hezbollah, entire populations have been displaced, thousands of civilians have been killed, and nearly a million have been pushed into makeshift shelters.

History has a long memory. It is unforgiving to those who confuse power with impunity. Trump, meanwhile, has shed even the veneer of restraint. A brazen enabler of Israel's war in Gaza – continuing the pattern of past United States administrations that armed and financed Israeli military actions – he has now plunged the US into confrontation with Iran. Acting without Congressional sanction, he has participated in targeted killings and launched repeated strikes on Iranian territory in pursuit of a nuclear threat that remains unproven.

Even within the US, alarm bells are ringing. Democrats, Republicans, and even elements of his own MAGA base have warned that such actions verge on war crimes. Yet Trump has chosen provocation over prudence. On April 5, in a message that stunned the world, he wrote: "Open the Fuckin' Strait, you crazy bastards, or you'll be living in Hell – JUST WATCH! Praise be to Allah." Days later came an even darker warning: "A whole civilisation will die tonight... I don't want that to happen, but it probably will."

This is not strategy. It is brinkmanship untethered from reason. And yet, for all the devastation, the outcomes tell a different story from the one intended by Washington and Tel Aviv. Gaza lies in ruins, but Hamas still holds ground. Lebanon has been battered, but Hezbollah retains the ability to strike. Iran, weakened by sanctions and targeted attacks, has not collapsed. Its leadership endures. Its posture remains defiant.

More strikingly, Iran appears to have turned the war to its economic advantage. Control over the Strait of Hormuz – through which a significant portion of the world's oil flows – has become its most potent weapon. Oil exports have risen, not fallen. Revenues have surged with rising prices. Shipping has come at a cost: reports suggest vessels paying substantial sums for safe passage, a quiet but powerful assertion of leverage.

In warfare, control is not only territorial – it is economic. For the US, the calculus is stark. Securing the Strait would require enormous military deployment: naval fleets, air power, ground forces, and sustained financial outlay. For Iran, disruption is far cheaper. A handful of drones, stray missiles, or naval mines can unsettle insurers, spike global prices, and choke supply lines. Fear, not firepower alone, governs these waters.

A single drone strike a day can achieve what fleets cannot – uncertainty. Iran may not possess nuclear weapons. It does not need them. Its grip over the Strait has already forced negotiation and a ceasefire. Meanwhile, internal dissent – especially among a younger population weary of clerical rule – has been overtaken by a larger sentiment: resistance to external aggression. Trump's war has done what decades of repression could not – it has united a fractured nation.

This is the paradox of modern conflict. Bombs consolidate the very regimes they seek to destroy. What emerges, stark and undeniable, is that West Asia continues to be viewed through the narrow prism of oil and petro-dollars. This lens blinds global powers to the human cost: the slaughter of civilians, the destruction of societies, the steady irrigation of desert sands with blood – civilian and soldier alike – where no roses bloom.

There is another truth, equally enduring. People dispossessed of their land do not surrender quietly. The right to self-determination – even through armed struggle – is recognised under international norms. Kill leaders, and others will rise. Crush cities, and resistance will harden.

Netanyahu and Trump may eliminate individuals. They cannot extinguish the idea of resistance. History offers a final, haunting image. Genghis Khan, conqueror of vast lands, is believed to have asked his advisor: "Is there any place where I will be forgiven for my sins?" It is a question that echoes across centuries. It awaits its answer still.

STATE, MARKET, SOCIETY

Help the State help itself

A quick glance around us today is enough to recognise that the government is struggling to carry out a lot of its duties and functions. Traffic, water supply, jobs, housing, natural resources – in one thing after another, it seems as though there is no system in place to understand and respond to challenges. Instead, there is a lot of drift and wishful thinking that somehow the government's acts of commission and omission will magically create solutions.

Over decades, the standard response from citizens has been to demand better performance through representation to the government, through petitions, protests, and elections, hoping for real change. This approach, clearly, is delivering only very limited results. We are still grappling with the same challenges we once hoped would be resolved long ago, like overflowing landfills, erratic power supply, poorly-thought-out projects, and all-round corruption.

Is there another path forward? To discover it, we must first dig into the root causes behind why our wishes remain unfulfilled. A part of the problem lies in a lack of genuine concern among the elected representatives and government officials for public services and broader societal purposes. Too often, their priorities point to political optics and vested interests rather than citizen needs – the choices proposed by experts are discarded while the whims of those in power turn into giant projects. Ignorance is a feature of the system; it is not a bug, and over time, it has firmly set in.

But there's more to it. In addition to the induced knowledge deficit, there is a huge collaboration deficit. Those in government have very little practice in solving problems by working with citizens, businesses, or academia, even when it is plainly evident that the *sarkar* alone cannot fix a problem. Perhaps this is a kind of shield – keeping citizens at arm's length reduces the risk that they'll notice how lost the government is about many things.

Ashwin Mahesh
A social entrepreneur, founder of Mapunity and LVBL, and co-founder, Lithium, wakes up with hope for the city and society, goes to bed with a sigh
@ashwinmahesh

This isn't going to change from within. It can only be changed from the outside. But how? If polls and protests have not worked, what else might?

I think we should try helping the government instead. Society is brimming with untapped skills that could prove valuable in governance, from data-savvy engineers mapping flood-prone areas in the city to environmentalists advocating regenerative farming for depleted soils. There are also lots of people who have, in their limited spheres of action, solved problems that the governments continue to struggle with. Their expertise could be very useful.

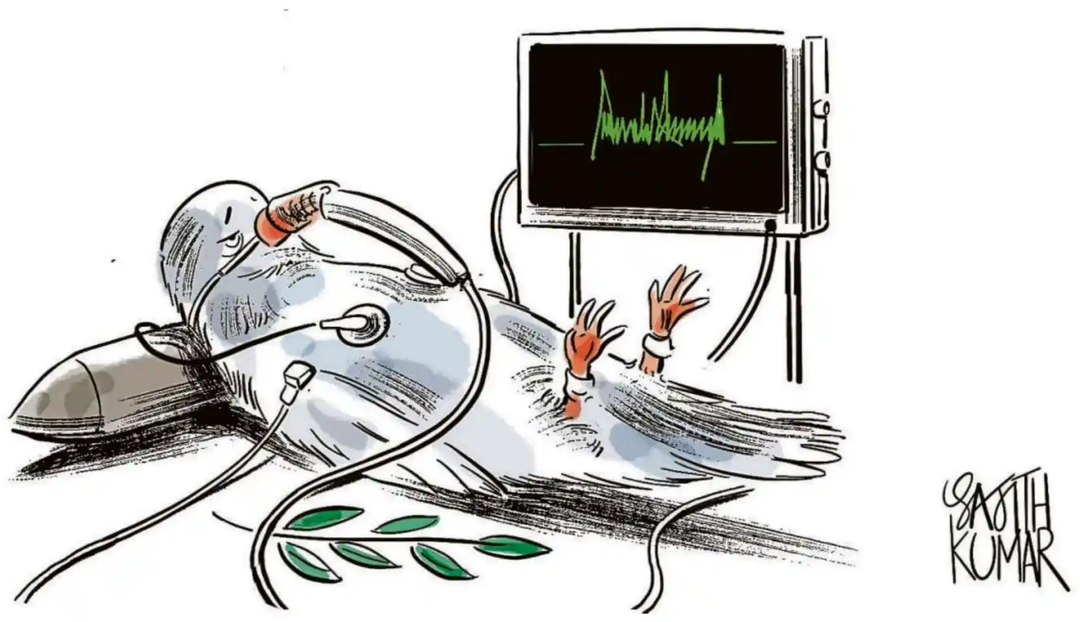
And let's not forget the sheer numbers: there are far more capable people outside government – technology professionals, academics, system designers, and others – than within its ranks. Initiatives such as citizen-led lake rejuvenation groups or the Namma Railu group that advocated suburban rail services show the potential, where well-informed volunteers have successfully nudged actions that seemed impossible in government. How? By adding their help to their demands.

This addition is important. Citizens' support for governance doesn't require us to abandon demands for accountability. In fact, it strengthens our claim to it. By offering help and delivering results, we strengthen our right to hold officials to higher standards.

And the better officials and representatives don't mind this. Several times in the last year, I have heard people in government say that they get a lot of good suggestions and believe that some of those would be good to implement, but they're unsure if the people they have in the department can do what's needed. I have learned not to despair when I hear that; accepting the limitations of the *status quo* is a beginning.

One might wonder, then, what taxes are for if citizens must pitch in? Aren't they meant to fund expert governance by others? Yes, but taxes were never intended to fund the outsourcing of every aspect of governance in a democracy. Think back to the Constitution – the journey of a democracy begins with 'we, the people'. Even in the best of times, it is only by doing some things right at the departure station that we can travel and arrive safely and on time.

The simplest thing each of us can do to nudge governance is to walk up to the local ward office, say, "You seem to be struggling with a few things," and then offer to help. It can seem abrupt, and even a little harsh. But it has another useful quality – it is true, and that makes it a good starting point for a new way forward.



THE LIVING STREAM

In pursuit of a humane world order

During the United States-Israel war with Iran, the African Union, where all the fifty countries of Africa are gathered to promote cooperation and economic integration within their continent, asked for deescalation of the conflict and dialogue. The complex relationships African countries have with the US, Iran, Israel, and the Gulf states are behind this diplomatic stance. African states have responded differently in their individual capacities: Kenya and Ethiopia, which have close ties to the Gulf countries, criticised Iranian strikes against them, whereas Tunisia, which has a strained relationship with the UAE, has not objected to them.

Geographically distant from West Asia and lacking direct stakes in the conflict, Latin American countries generally called for de-escalation. Bolivia, Cuba, and Venezuela condemned US-Israeli military action, whereas Argentina supported it. Central American countries, which have extensive trade relations with the US, neither endorsed nor objected to the war.

At a remove from the central dynamics of the conflict, like Latin America, Oceania aligned diplomatically with the US. Australia officially endorsed the US aim of preventing Iran from possessing a nuclear weapon. New Zealand, too.

By staying away from direct military involvement and placing the NATO arrangement under greater strain, European Union member states failed to present a unified stance. The United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy recognised that the US and Israel violated international law, but none of them formally condemned it. The UK came around to offering its airbases for the use of the US Air Force. Poland and the Czech Republic expressed political support to the US's military action. Spain stood out globally for being the lone principled objector to war and its refusal to allow the US access to its airbases. Norway extended support to it. Opposing the US-Israeli attacks on Iran, Russia avoided direct military involvement while providing intelligence and possibly limited military-technical assistance to Iran.

Chandan Gowda
The Vidyashilp Professor looks for new ways of looking
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Whereas ASEAN issued a general call for all the parties to resolve the conflict peacefully, its member states with large Muslim populations, like Malaysia and Brunei, condemned the US-Israel actions. As a member of Donald Trump's Board of Peace initiative, Indonesia, another Muslim-majority ASEAN country, did not condemn US actions even as it expressed sympathy for Iran. The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam issued generic calls for ending the conflict without antagonising the US. China sought to facilitate a ceasefire without military involvement, while continuing to offer tacit support to Iran. I presume India's and Pakistan's stances are already familiar to readers.

Various countries now look set to reconsider their long-term energy strategies, including diversifying their global energy security sources and increasing investments in renewable and nuclear energy.

The responses to this tragic, utterly avoidable war lay bare a predictable pattern of self-interested conduct among nations. The Spanish Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez, stands out for his firm opposition to the war and his insistence on upholding international law. His principled stand did not waver in the face of Trump's threat of sanctions against Spain.

A multilateral democratic world order, essential for addressing shared problems, cannot rest on the worship of narrow national self-interest. The failure to mount a determined effort to halt Russia's war in Ukraine and Israel's military aggression against Palestine further exposes the hollowness of the latter political ideal: it leaves no room for a politics of hope, for a politics committed to creating an international order in which war has no place.

From time to time, anti-war protest rallies and peace meetings, large and small, have served to keep alive the dream of a cooperative, non-violent world. The dream needs to grow into a cultural force. Compassionate artists, filmmakers, musicians, religious leaders, journalists, teachers, academics, and others can help cultivate broader visions of community, justice, and humanity in the public imagination. Their efforts can breathe new life into ethical debates and revitalise the diminished moral conscience in contemporary times.

GADFLY

An apology to the displaced

Dear members of the Tree, the Bird, the Ant and Small Animal communities of my apartment complex in northern Bengaluru: Hello and I trust this small note finds you well wherever you are. I hope you are alive. I no longer live here as employment has taken me to another part of the city. But I return as much as I can because I have family and a close-knit community of old friends whom I try to visit often. Of late, I haven't been here and seen you. Last week, I received a message on my phone from friends in the neighbouring skyscraper, where many of you have also lived or frequently visited.

The picture was taken from my friends' balcony, from where I often glimpsed my own home of 26 years. The picture showed our old line of trees pruned, cut, and razed. It was mortifying, and later, when I entered the apartment (after several weeks) for tea with my folks and some community members, the sight of fallen trees, leaves, branches, barks, and the thought of what would have happened to all of you affected me while I drove back.

So, I write this to you: Please don't mistake me or my fellow human community members, they are all nature lovers, and they love you more than most. Many are children and teenagers who love you more than some of their elders. Many of the older people pray for and worship you.

Recently, after detailed considerations and consultations, the resident welfare association of the apartment complex took long-pending decisions on the unfortunately hazardous members of the old tree community.

Our RWA has nature-loving souls. They followed due process to get expert human views on the matter. Conservationists, agricultural experts, and nature experts from the Gandhi Krishi Vigyan Kendra at the University of Agricultural Sciences were consulted, as was the environment department, for clearances and the way ahead.

Rahul Jayaram
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Truth is, the trees were old, prone to fall and cause great damage. All of them fringe the complex's borders and share their riches with neighbouring buildings. That meant even residents in our neighbouring complexes were in danger of a falling branch or tree. Many of the cut trees are to be relocated and hopefully even replanted in friendlier environments for them. I don't know if what I say is a justification for what has taken place. But I feel impelled to convey my apologies to you. Because it's the least a human can afford to say to you, who have showered us with your love, warmth, grace, and affection since the creation of this apartment complex. When I say this, I'm certain I write not only for myself, but for most other members of the human community in the apartment. And yes, we shall replant new trees in the future months.

As the large garden area of the apartment cut a post-apocalyptic picture when I saw it last, I recalled that whole phase of Covid when the garden area was at its busiest. The screech of the parakeet, the coos of the brahminy kites, and the squawk of the mynahs had turned into a soundtrack of life here. The sunbirds chirping near a shrub close to our swimming pool, where on a tiled patch I'd spread my yoga mat for *suryanamaskars* are some of my happiest memories of living in this city.

One of our slimmest, oldest, and tallest trees had a cavity in the upper reaches of its trunk that had become the home of a brahminy kite couple. We'd get a heartening glimpse of them from our terraces, as one of them flew away to fetch a twig or two.

There was a time when there were squirrels aplenty on these trees and, of course, bats. Now, we hear sounds, and sometimes a bird or two – perhaps a former resident returns to gaze at a possibly lost home. I don't know what to say, but sorry, but I really do hope once our greens return, you shall be back again. Please forgive us and grace us with your affections again. Please let us know how we can make amends. Can we at all?

JUDGMENT DAY

Designed for addiction? A legal reckoning for social media

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We underestimate the importance of design in our lives. We focus on acts and people, and we tend to take systems and structures for granted. But design elements – how our cities are built, how our educational institutions are governed, how our economic system is managed, and how our families are constituted – greatly impact our lives. Focusing on design features has one major problem – it is difficult to attribute blame or responsibility when things go wrong. It's always easier to blame individuals and actions rather than design features because many design elements, say the manner in which the market is constituted, occur by happenstance rather than intentionally. But when design happens by design, it opens up the possibility for holding people responsible for any ensuing harm.

This brings me to the social media landscape where, as is clear by now, there is harm, particularly to the very young and the very old and to plenty of people in between. Instagram, Facebook, X, YouTube, and TikTok are platforms that thrive on their members engaging with each other. More engagement means more advertisements. Not content with organic engagement, the platforms want to engineer engagement. They want people to stay on the platform as long as possible. To this end, they design their platforms with features like infinite scrolling that encourage people to view a continuous stream of content.

Kaley, a social media user in the United States, started on YouTube when she was six and on Instagram when she was nine. Soon, she was addicted to the social media universe and developed anxiety, depression, and body dysmorphia. She sued Meta, Google, TikTok, and Snap in the Los Angeles County Superior Court, arguing that the social media platforms were responsible for the state she was in. TikTok and Snap took the path of least resistance and settled. Meta and Google fought it out and lost the case. In the US, such cases are considered tort claims, meaning a civil case where one party alleges another breached a duty of care, causing harm for which compensation is sought. Such cases are decided in the US by jury trials. The jury, in *K.G.M. v Meta et al*, returned a guilty verdict stating that Meta and Google were negligent in designing their platforms (Instagram and YouTube, respectively) because their systems allowed users to become addicted to the platforms and suffer harm. The jury awarded six million dollars in damages: three million compensatory and three million punitive.

There is a lot to unpack here. To begin with, the US, like India, has a safe harbour provision in its law for social media platforms. Under this provision, they are not liable for harmful content they host as long as they fulfil certain conditions and perform due diligence in regulating the content. The provision effectively transfers the risk of harmful content to the creators rather than the platforms. The K.G.M. case does not so much reallocate the risk as much as create a new risk category based on design. The case appears agnostic about the harmfulness of the content; it focuses exclusively on design. If the design of a system leads to people spending too much time on the system, the system is culpable.

The case is a bellwether for future regulation of the tech industry. There are multiple cases against social media giants seeking damages for their allegedly addictive systems. The K.G.M. case might be the gateway for a more aggressive legal response. But despite the popular rhetoric against Meta and Google, we must parse carefully the legal issues of culpability and harm. Should design elements that actively encourage user engagement make platforms liable for harm? Shouldn't we also address social media addiction by restricting access? Don't parents carry any responsibility in limiting their children's access to social media? What about schools? Meta and Google dominate the markets, and people looking for online social engagement have to rely on these giants. Perhaps, this is enough to make them accountable, but this kind of monopoly responsibility needs to be fleshed out in greater detail.

Similarly, we must be cautious in ascribing harm to supposedly addictive social media platforms. How do we settle on a fact-finding process that brings a certain measure of certainty to the determination of harm from social media addiction? What about the person's medical history, family circumstances, or work pressures? Social media platforms have a lot to answer for, but those answers must be embedded in sound legal reasoning. Policymaking in this area is in its infancy. The K.G.M. case can become the fulcrum around which we can develop more sophisticated models of legal responsibility for social media platforms.

Skin-deep risks

In the concluding part of our series on unattainable beauty and wellness goals, Amullya Shivashankar visits Bengaluru's salons where the hum of hairdryers mingles with the language of peels and drips. As convenience takes centre stage, experts tell her that the risks, from burns to botched procedures, are becoming harder to ignore

Walk into a neighbourhood salon today, and the experience can feel strikingly different from just a few years ago. Alongside haircuts and facials, menus now feature chemical peels, IV drips, and even Botox-like treatments, often described in clinical language that mirrors a dermatologist's clinic. This curious shift reflects a growing demand for quick, accessible beauty solutions, but it also raises critical questions about safety, regulation, and accountability.

As the boundaries between grooming and medical care blur, customers are increasingly navigating a space where expertise is not always clearly defined. Social media trends, aggressive marketing, and the promise of instant results have accelerated this transformation, making advanced cosmetic procedures more visible and seemingly routine. But behind the glossy advertisements lies a more complex reality, one that dermatologists say is leading to rising cases of complications and misuse.

Chasing one-stop solutions

On a busy Bengaluru street, Tarana (*name changed*) walks into a salon for a routine facial. Minutes later, she is advised to opt for a medical-grade chemical peel for pigmentation and a scalp infusion marketed as "hair Botox". The setting itself remains unchanged — mirrors lined with lights, the hum of hairdryers, and music in the background — but the menu has evolved. What was once limited to haircuts, colouring, and basic grooming now reads like a clinical brochure, promising "brighter skin" and "anti-ageing therapies".

For many customers, this shift is welcome — a one-stop solution for all hair and skincare needs. But beyond the glossy surface, this transformation is blurring the line between grooming and medicine, between a doctor and a beautician. This raises questions about training, oversight, and how far a salon can go before it begins to operate like a clinic.

When nearly 15 salons across the city were contacted for appointments, more than 10 were offering treatments that clinics or medical professionals should ideally perform. When asked whether in-house medical professionals or beauticians would conduct these procedures, many confirmed that beauticians would carry them out. Two said a dermatologist would provide a prescription, but the procedure itself would be performed by staff.

Explaining the growing preference for salons over clinics, Dr Suman S, a qualified dermatologist, said, "The wide availability of training opportunities for laypersons to perform cosmetic procedures has led to the uncontrolled growth of salons, which now outnumber clinics."

Signboards promising results "in just one session" or "overnight" are common across more than half of these establishments. Highlighting this trend, Dr Suman added, "Fancy advertisements, easy access to self-proclaimed cosmetologists, and the promise of high returns are strong motivators for beauticians."

Recalling her experience treating patients after salon procedures, she said, "Beauticians often convince clients that these treatments will make their skin glow. People with acne are given false hope that it will disappear. Patients come to me with side effects. One patient developed burns after undergoing bleaching, a facial, and chemical peels. Such incidents are recurring."

The danger of chemical peels

Chemical peels are among the most popular treatments today, driven largely by social media trends. Some skincare brands have even introduced at-home peel kits. However, doctors warn that salons offering these treatments often lack adequate safety protocols and knowledge.

Explaining the procedure, Dr Shireen Furtado, Senior Consultant in Medical and Cosmetic Dermatology at a private hospital, said, "Chemical peels are acidic solutions used in controlled proportions to exfoliate the top layer of the skin. They must be used in mild concentrations to avoid damaging the skin barrier." They are commonly used to treat acne marks, active acne, pigmentation, and sun damage. "Peels remove the damaged outer layer, promote cell turnover, and can give a glow. While the process itself is not complex, it requires an understanding of the patient's skin type," she said.

Using peels on dry or sensitive skin without consultation can be harmful. A major concern is the lack of pre- and post-care guidance.

"When peels are not performed by professionals, patients are not informed about aftercare. For instance, avoiding sun exposure is critical, but many are unaware, leading to further pigmentation," Dr Shireen explained. She also warned against combining peels with other active ingredients or acids. "For pigmentation, stronger peels are sometimes used, but they can lead to rebound post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, making the skin appear drier and more weathered," she added.

Botox: Celebrity-endorsed

Botox remains one of the most popular aesthetic treatments, fuelled by celebrity influence and the desire to achieve a similar appearance. However, its presence in salon menus is alarming. Dr Ruby Sachdev, Consultant Aesthetic Physician, warned that the risks go beyond poor cosmetic results.

"Incorrect placement and dosing are the most common issues when Botox is administered by untrained individuals. Injecting too close to certain muscles can cause eyelid drooping or an uneven smile," she said. She also raised concerns about hygiene and product handling. "Improper storage or dilution affects both safety and effectiveness. Recognising complications early requires medical judgement: it's not just about skill, but also safety standards," she added.

A newer term seen in salon brochures is "hair Botox". Responding to this, Dr Ruby clarified, "It's purely a marketing term. There is no medical treatment where Botox is used for hair in this way."

"What salons call hair Botox is usually a deep conditioning treatment with proteins, amino acids, and smoothing agents. It temporarily improves hair texture but does not involve injections or affect hair growth or scalp biology. The name is misleading," she said.

Allergic reactions

Even basic procedures like facial hair removal are now leading to complications. From burns caused by waxing to allergic reactions from hair removal creams, dermatologists report an increasing number of cases.

Dr Priyanka Kuri, Consultant Dermatologist, said, "Laser treatments are the most effective option for long-term hair removal. For light facial hair, single-blade razors are safe and effective." She also addressed a common myth: "Razors do not increase hair thickness. They can also remove superficial dead skin, helping reduce tanning." She strongly advised against waxing. "Hot wax can burn the skin, damage the barrier, increase ingrown hair, and cause irritation," she said.

IV infusions

The use of intravenous infusions containing glutathione and vitamins for skin brightening has also surged. Sessions can cost anywhere between 5,000 and 20,000. However, doctors caution that there is insufficient evidence to support these claims. High doses can lead to side effects such as nausea, skin rashes, and potential kidney or liver damage.

"Many of these drips contain Vitamin B12, Vitamin C, and glutathione. Patients taking them frequently risk fluid overload. Excess antioxidants, especially glutathione, can cause liver toxicity," said Dr Priyanka. She stressed that such treatments should only be administered by qualified medical professionals after proper evaluation.

"Blood tests are essential before prescribing any vitamin therapy. These should be based on actual deficiencies," she added. While patients may feel more energetic after such treatments, she clarified that claims of skin brightening are not scientifically proven.

Know your specialist

Earlier, skin and hair concerns meant a visit to a dermatologist, while grooming needs were addressed by beauticians. Today, these roles are increasingly blurred.

- Dermatologists are qualified medical doctors who complete MBBS (5.5 years) followed by postgraduate specialisation (MD/DNB/DVD) in Dermatology, Venereology, and Leprosy. They are trained in diagnosing and treating skin conditions, performing procedures, and are licensed by medical councils.
- Cosmetologists are trained professionals who focus on beautifying hair, skin, and nails through services such as styling, colouring, facials, and makeup. They are not qualified to perform invasive treatments.
- Aestheticians receive formal training, often through beauty schools or short-term fellowships, to provide skincare services such as acne maintenance and improving skin texture. However, they are best suited to work under the supervision of a dermatologist.

Do you follow a celebrity face sleuth?

It's a confounding and oddly fascinating social media trend that finds medical professionals and amateurs alike trying to do detective work on celebrity faces

Often when I'm scrolling through Instagram, hypnotised by the stream of videos, an actress' face will cut through the noise. This isn't a typical clip from a press junket or red carpet. Instead, it will feature side-by-side images of the star, one younger and one more recent. Then a content creator — perhaps a doctor or an aesthetician, sometimes wearing scrubs — will walk me through what cosmetic procedures they think the actress has had. (It's much rarer that men get this kind of analysis.)

The tone of these posts is usually complimentary. The creator raves about how wonderful the actress looks, all the while describing how she has supposedly had: Botox, a temporal brow lift, an upper blepharoplasty (eyelid surgery), rhinoplasty, a mid-face lift, and lip filler.

It's all guesswork, but these creators speak with a level of authority, supporting their arguments with visuals and pointing out the areas that they assume have been altered. It's a confounding and oddly fascinating social media trend that finds medical professionals and amateurs alike trying to do detective work on celebrity faces.

Emma Stone has become a frequent target for these shameless sleuths. Margot Robbie, Jennifer Lawrence and Anne Hathaway are, too. And while much of the material comes from plastic surgeons or aesthetics professionals who are essentially advertising their services, these posts also function as a form of entertainment, in part because they recruit the audience in their investigations.

Fans will ask for videos on specific celebs in the comments section. The posts essentially ask you to play along in a game of "spot the difference" — with actual humans as the puzzle.

They also claim to offer a glimpse into a world where, with a lot of money and access, you can shift your looks in small but impactful ways. There's an element of taboo-breaking, openly discussing what most stars would like to keep quiet. And inadvertently, these creators chronicle how beauty standards and trends change in a relatively short time as stars manage their image and grow into their careers. Slim is now in, with fuller features like round, plump cheeks replaced by hollow ones achieved through buccal fat removal.

But these internet commentaries often ignore other reasons that faces might alter over the years, like ageing, pregnancy or even makeup. (Good contouring can go a long way.) They pick before-and-after photos that support their arguments rather than ones that might complicate them.

Of course, talking about whether an actress has had injectables or plastic surgery is part of a long tradition of judging women's looks. In the days before Instagram and TikTok, this was typically relegated to the pages of tabloids and gossip rags, where stars were criticised for weight gain and visible cellulite.

It seems telling that the social media posts analysing faces rarely focus on the women in their primary job: acting. And that's perhaps because looking at them without red carpet glam might distract from the narrative the content creators are pushing.

As for the women themselves, it locks them into the same unwinnable position they have always been in: trying to survive in an industry that still values youth and beauty but also side-eyes anything that isn't ostensibly natural. Whether they try to be as discreet as possible or own up to the changes, they'll still be the subject of speculation and gossip.

After the Oscars, Hathaway posted a video showing how her hairstylist made two tiny, discreet braids on each side of her face near her temples and pulled them back, achieving an effect not that dissimilar from a facelift. "And you look a little bit more awake," Hathaway says with a smile. Is that enough to silence the armchair critics who have made her face one of their targets? Probably not.

NYT

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: DEEPAK HARICHANDAN

FEEDBACK
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ASTROSPEAK
Guruji Shrii Arnav

Scan the QR code to read the ***weekly horoscope***

In this slim volume, Faleiro traces the changes in a faith long imagined as serene and explores in depth how its language of compassion is morphing into one of rage, writes AVS Namboodiri

An unquiet SILENCE

The author, during her travels, realised that there was a rising acceptance of violence and aggression for what was deemed the protection of Buddhism. Seen here are Sri Lankan Buddhist monks inside an ancient temple in Sri Lanka. (PIC FOR REPRESENTATION)

Sonia Faleiro's The Robe and the Sword: How Buddhist Extremism is Shaping Modern Asia follows a spectre that is haunting parts of South Asia — radical Buddhism, which many would see as a contradiction in terms. Buddhism has, in public thinking and discourse, been associated with peace and non-violence, and the Middle Path that shuns extremes. But Sonia recounts the transformation of the religion into a militant faith, mixed up with racial or national identities or both, directed against minorities and drawing its power and even legitimacy from hatred, intolerance and intimidation. It is the invention of the Other in society and politics, aided by colonial policies and spurred by wrong readings of history, that created inverted versions of Buddhism in the region, with radical monks turning their robes into weapons.

Faleiro, author and journalist, travels from Dharamshala in India, where the Tibetan Buddhists live in exile, to Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand to observe and record the transformation.

It is a slim volume, which details the changes in the religion in the three countries with the help of profiles of radical Buddhist monks and their conduct, the structure and activities of the militant organisations that champion an extreme form of Buddhism, events from the present and the past and conversations with a range of people. The style and approach are journalistic, but Faleiro provides depth and width to her stories with historical accounts and a search for the roots of the changes in history, social and demographic situations and traditions. She tells tales of people and groups in each place, and they are stories of deaths and destruction, attacks and intimidation that fragment lives and disrupt families and communities.

After spending time in Dharamshala and meeting Lhakpa Tsering, who had once attempted self-immolation in protest against the visit by the then Chinese leader Hu Jintao to India, she realised that there was rising acceptance of violence and aggression for what was deemed protection of Buddhism. There was a sense of crisis among followers that demanded a more engaged Buddhism, which responded to violence not only with contemplation but also with action. As Faleiro left Dharamshala, she felt something had shifted, and the silence no longer sounded like peace.

It is this shift that she explores in other countries. Everywhere, the religion is presented as a faith in crisis, which needs to be retrieved, and this could only be done by fighting other faiths and persecuting their followers. Religion is turned into a majoritarian force to suppress the minorities — Tamils and Muslims in Sri Lanka, and the Muslim Rohingya in the Rakhine state of Myanmar. The Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) is an ultra nationalist organisation of Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka, and its counterpart in Myanmar is Ma Ba Tha. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara, the hardline monk in Sri Lanka, and Ashin Wirathu, described as "one of modern Buddhism's most polarising figures" in Myanmar, lead the charge of the new religious brigade, never shying away from violence and advocating it.

Buddhism becomes political and is identified with national identity. Those who do not belong in terms of religion are branded as outsiders and enemies who deserve punishment and are actually punished. Attacks are described, and the testimonies of victims, such as Fazeena Fihar, who is still struggling to rebuild her life after her house was ransacked in 2014, are presented. There were killings and destruction, and Gnanasara once said his duty was to act against any threat to Buddhism. "Attaining nirvana can wait", he said.

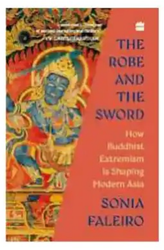
Economic and social differences and fault lines also fed into the politics of religious militancy and exclusion.

In Myanmar, Asin Wirathu, the leader of the extremist 969 movement, uses race, religion, colour of the skin and language to shape wilful and hostile attitudes and target Muslims. The state also becomes a party to the campaign. But there is resistance also, though feeble. Faleiro meets Abbot Zero, who was once a follower of Asin Wirathu but now protests against militant Buddhism. He lives in the Thai city of Mae Sot, which borders Myanmar, hiding there.

The situation in Thailand is different. It is not a case of hostility to practitioners of other religions but of corruption and degeneration of Buddhism as it was known and practised, and its co-option by the state represented by the royalty and the military. Monks have turned greedy, love comfort and luxury and are even known for sexual escapades, violating the vows that bind them to poverty, celibacy and other values and practices propounded by the religion.

Monks are not allowed to take part in politics but are pampered and privileged. The argument is that Buddhism, as it was known, has been changed, though not in the way it has changed in Sri Lanka and Myanmar. The change has been attributed to the rise of a new middle class in the 1970s and 1980s, the transition of society from agriculture to industrialisation and from tradition to modernity. Faleiro notes a bright side, also. There are monks and temples which who stick to the hard and difficult path.

The radicalisation of Buddhism is similar to the radicalisation of other religions, such as Islam and Hinduism, though local and specific situations might differ in countries. Extremist Buddhist bodies have links with radical Hindu organisations. Faleiro mentions these links in passing, but does not explain the changes in Buddhism as part of the changes that have happened to other religions in the world. The rise of militant religions and their links with rightist politics have common themes and causes, and have been studied and commented on. That may not have been the intention of this book, but her account is a useful aid to such studies.



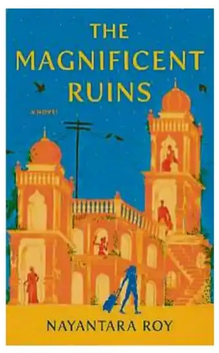
THE ROBE AND THE SWORD
Sonia Faleiro
Fourth Estate, pp 160, Rs 599

Between excess and emptiness

This is a sprawling novel about homecoming that promises depth and complexity, but stumbles midway, and the narrative gradually begins to fray, writes Parvathi Ramkumar

The Magnificent Ruins by Nayantara Roy is a sprawling exploration of one woman's journey back to the house of her childhood. Lila De, a successful book editor based in Brooklyn, suddenly discovers that her grandfather has left her the old, somewhat crumbling but vast house in Kolkata. Her family, still living in that house, wants to know why it is hers. Lila decides to return to Kolkata. There, she encounters her difficult mother, an extremely complex grandmother, friendly cousins, and troubled, tortured aunts and uncles.

In Brooklyn, Lila has a life she is comfortable with. As an editor, she discovers promising authors and is also having an affair with one of the writers she is working with. Her family — her stepmother and half-siblings — are people she enjoys spending time with. She is handed a promotion.



THE MAGNIFICENT RUINS
Nayantara Roy
Hachette, pp 436, Rs 899

Lila consistently ignores her mother's calls from Kolkata; there is history there, and she has not had an easy time with her mother's moods, tempers, and gaslighting. At times, she also ignores or cannot take calls from other relatives in India. When news of her grandfather's passing reaches her — later than it should — Lila gets on a plane to Kolkata.

Right off the bat, Lila's impressions of the city are coloured by dangers of her own imagining. She fears for her life as a woman in India. She fears the food because of dysentery, yet eats what her family cooks. The heat is intolerable. The house is crumbling because, Lila notes, the family does not have air conditioning. She immediately suggests improvements to the house and finds her ideas are not well-received. She pontificates on zamindari and caste systems, and on the colour of her own skin and the oppression of women.

Lila's family is colourful — and at times unhinged. Her mother gaslights, grows petulant, created a scandal in the past by divorcing Lila's father, and refuses to seek professional help. The younger cousins have lives of their own, with engagements, weddings, and YouTube channels. Lila's work is not taken seriously, but her status as a single woman certainly is. She is often referred to as "the American".

In Kolkata, Lila makes jumbled and peculiar observations about India's political climate, often tinged with disdain. Much of her commentary resembles that of a foreigner reading about a country and judging it without real understanding. The politics in The Magnificent Ruins are cookie-cutter, predictable, and flat. There are identity crises, unlawful activities, nationalism, and cracks in administration — both local and national — with little sense of lived experience behind any of it.

Pic for representation.

The food is great, of course. Except when it causes indigestion.

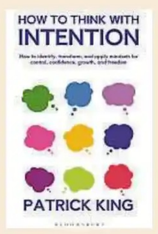
Lila also begins an affair with a married crush from her college days. Then Seth, the author she was involved with in Brooklyn, shows up, complicating matters further. People are almost unusually kind to Lila, despite her lashing out at them. Her cousins are young and energetic, with distinct voices. Her uncle Hari stands out as a unique character. There is tragedy in the house — fractured marriages, domestic abuse, and resentment towards Lila, who wants to install an elevator. Through it all, Lila, to her credit, does try to find a sense of him in the land she grew up in.

The narration is slow-paced and, at times, tedious. There are long stretches of history, which, while useful, significantly slow the story. Lila's examination of cultural norms and religious strife barely skims the surface and reveals little understanding of either. Her identity, torn between the US and India, is positioned as a central theme, but could have been explored with greater depth and poignancy. There are also far too many nicknames in the novel.

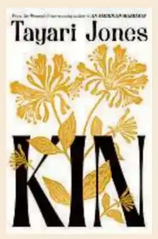
Overall, The Magnificent Ruins is an ambitious story with the makings of an intriguing and complex family saga. Better pacing, tighter editing, less random commentary, and a more nuanced exploration of Kolkata would have enhanced the readability of this work.

BOOKRACK

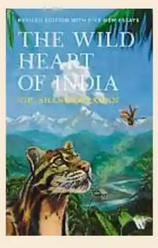
RELEASE ME
Tahereh Mafi
HarperCollins, pp 400, Rs 499
Set in the electrifying Shatter Me universe, this new instalment marks a powerful return to a world of high-stakes rebellion, dangerous alliances and forbidden desires.



HOW TO THINK WITH INTENTION
Patrick King
Bloomsbury, pp 208, Rs 599
Drawing from cognitive behavioural techniques, real life coaching insights, and scientific research, the book introduces a radical yet practical shift from passive thinking to intentional thinking.



KIN
Tayari Jones
OneWorld, pp 368, Rs 650
Tayari Jones returns with an exuberant, richly told story about mothers, daughters, and a lifelong friendship that is as dangerous as it is unbreakable.



THE WILD HEART OF INDIA
T R Shankar Raman
Westland, pp 512, Rs 79
Braiding scientific insights with personal reflections, this brilliant collection of essays probes the question of what it truly means to be a part of nature.

ALMOST SIXTEEN
Arsh Verma
Penguin, pp 312, Rs 399

In this brand new coming-of-age novel, the author leads us on a bittersweet and irreverent journey through first love, fragile friendships, and the messy, often hilarious trials and tribulations of adolescence.

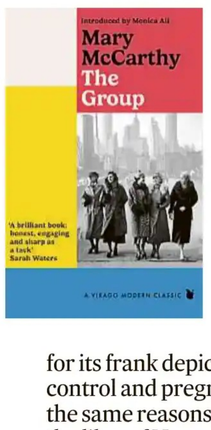
A 'lady book' full of brutal truths

The era McCarthy depicts in her novel may be long past, but its concerns, the hypocrisies of class and the pursuit of materialism don't seem dated, writes Saudha Kasim

The novel is a no-holds-barred fictionalised account of her fellow Vassar graduates, the friendships they forge and the frictions they encounter.

In a recent *Boston Review* article, The Novelists and the Warmongers, Andrew Holter analyses the legacy of Mary McCarthy's Vietnam War reporting, which "proved some of the most controversial American journalism to emerge from the war". Holter contends that McCarthy's work was controversial not because she was exposing "one of the many war crimes perpetrated by US forces" but because "her reporting depicted the war as something perhaps even more painful for many Americans to confront: a psychodrama of vanity and hubris that indicted the values of the 'Greatest Generation' to which she belonged."

Controversy was nothing new to McCarthy — four year before her Vietnam reportage, the book that would cement her legacy as a trailblazer, a no-holds-barred fictionalised account of her fellow Vassar graduates set in the 1930s, The Group, had been published, garnering notoriety for its frank depiction of sex and birth control and pregnancy, acclaim for the same reasons, sneering reviews by the likes of Norman Mailer, criticism from her classmates, and great commercial success. It was also banned in multiple countries.



That was more than six decades ago. Surely, The Group (a "lady-book" as Mailer called it) doesn't have the power to shock in the age of the internet? Turns out, it can be discomfiting to read a forensic account of a young woman's first sexual encounter even in 2026, not because the author is indulging in voyeurism, but because in McCarthy's narrative, the power imbalances, the unfairness, the pain and shame are shown without any attempts to sugarcoat the brutal truth. The woman in question — Dorothy "Dottie" Renfrew — is introduced to us in the first pages of The Group as "a devout Episcopal communicant" attending the wedding of her Vassar roommate Kay Strong in New York in June, 1933.

At the wedding, which is also attended by six other Vassar grads whose stories are told through the course of the novel, Dottie meets the alcoholic divorced painter, Dick Brown and in keeping with the rest of her group's thinking, that "The worst fate...would be to become like Mother and Dad, stuffy and frightened", has the aforementioned encounter with Brown in an "attic room that smelled of cooking fat". Dottie later visits a doctor to get a contraceptive device on Brown's recommendation, and after being stood up by him, leaves the city.

After that shock of an opener, McCarthy's perspective on the lives of these women comes sharply into focus: that of women from upper and middle classes who are given the best possible liberal college education and yet expected to do nothing more than play second fiddle to men and pursue empty materialistic lives generously doused in alcohol and regrets. McCarthy spares nothing, not even the debate between bottle- and breast-feeding babies — as depicted in the tragicomic experience of Priss Crockett who gives birth to her first child at New York Hospital where, "She would have been more comfortable in the short cotton hospital nightshirt that tied in the back but the floor nurses every morning made her struggle into a satin-and-lace 'nightie' from her trousseau. Doctor's orders, they said."

Not all her characters are damned to sad marriages and couplings — Polly Andrews has a low-paying job as a technician in Cornell Medical Center. Her family has lost their money, and she's briefly entangled with a vacillating intellectual, but she knows how to make do with less compared to her peers and marries a doctor who seems sensible. The other character, who's briefly glimpsed and often mentioned, the wealthy Elinor "Lakey" Eastlake, moves to Europe, where she lives with greater freedom with various female lovers. The Group ends just as the Second World War breaks out, and the friends gather for a funeral of one of their own.

The era McCarthy depicts in The Group may be long past, but its concerns, the hypocrisies of class and gender, sexual politics and violence, the pursuit of materialism, and the clash between leftist and conservative political movements (sadly) don't seem dated at all.

That One Book *is a monthly column that does exactly what it says — it takes up one great classic and tells you why it is (still) great. The author is a writer and communications professional. She blogs at saudha.substack.com*

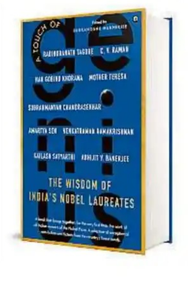
READ OF THE WEEK

This book brings together, for the very first time, the work of all Indian (Indian citizens, naturalised Indians, and erstwhile citizens of independent India) winners of the Nobel Prize — Rabindranath Tagore (1913), CV Raman (1930), Har Gobind Khorana (1968), Mother Teresa (1979), Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar (1983), Amartya Sen (1998), Venkatraman Ramakrishnan (2009), Kailash Satyarthi (2014), and Abhijit V Banerjee (2019).

The book, which contains over seventy essays, stories, poems, songs, and prayers, is divided into ten sections: Memoir, Literature, Science, Economics, Religion and Philosophy, Aesthetics, Inequality and Injustice, Politics, India, and Nobel Lectures. Each of the sections contains illuminating chapters that provide the reader with extraordinary insights into the human condition, literature, art, science, religion, philosophy, politics, human rights, economics, and the world we live in.

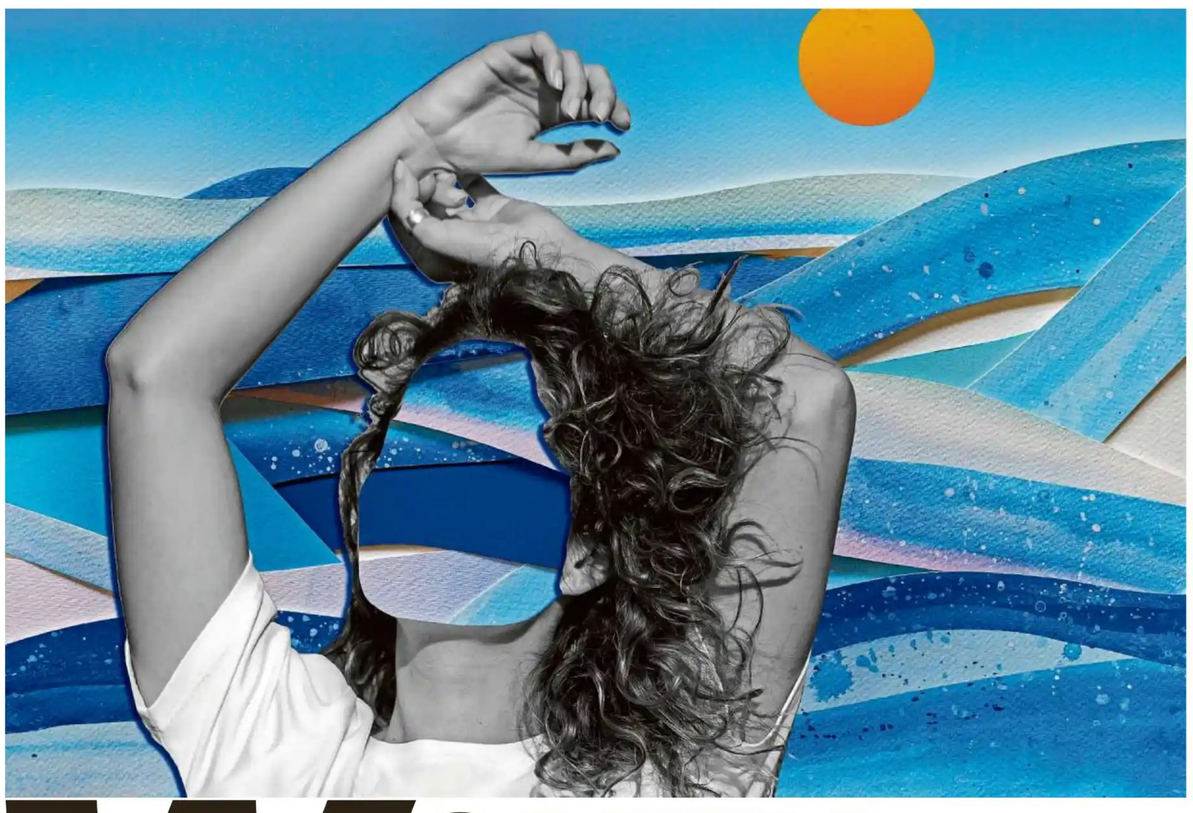
Composed by the country's finest minds, A Touch of Genius promises to be a book you would certainly want in your library.

Rudrangshu Mukherjee is Chancellor and Professor of History at Ashoka University and the author of over a dozen books, the latest of which is Song of India: A Study of the National Anthem.



WOMEN WHO WANDER

Solo women travellers face many barriers, from safety issues and inhibitions to a lack of confidence in companies that offer tour packages. Thanks to firms that cater exclusively to small groups of women, travel has turned liberating and fun for many, discovers Madhumita Gupta



"I wanted to travel on my own when I had time on my hands. I would talk to my friends, and plan but nothing worked," says Rewa* who is based in Pune. It was then that she started looking for women's only groups and found Jugni Travels.

Rewa got in touch with the founder of the group, Nitesh Rathore, who not only assuaged her doubts and convinced her husband but also handheld Rewa through her visa and air ticket process. Rewa was then all set to travel to Europe for the first time ever, on her own!

Travelling alone was difficult, and in some cases, downright impossible for many women even about a decade ago but not any more. Thanks to the presence of travel companies catering exclusively to small groups of women and taking them across the country and around the globe, it isn't just possible but also immensely liberating and full of fun.

Idea behind these groups

Interestingly, many of these travel groups were started because the idea resonated with the founders at a personal level. Shibani Vig, a NIFT graduate and an avid traveller says, "I used to travel alone a lot and was often asked how I managed to do that. This made me think about women who also wanted to travel alone but couldn't." Learning about boutique-travel abroad gave her the idea of founding WeGoBond, her women's-only travel company, which has been conducting tours to places as diverse as the ancient ruins of Hampi, the breathtaking valleys of Spiti, and the unearthly magic of the Northern lights.

If it was Shibani's empathy for those who couldn't travel alone that led to WeGoBond, Jugni Travels was founded when Nitesh, a former corporate employee, heard his female colleagues complaining about the difficulty of women travelling alone in India.

For Anuj Jain, it was watching at close hand the frustration he felt watching his sister plan several trips and cancel them that led to Wander Womaniya. "Women across all age-groups, from 17 to 70, join us," says Ananya Desai, Operations and Strategy Manager at Wander Womaniya. "Women have always wanted to travel alone but the fear of the unknown often has held them back. The reasons have ranged from safety concerns to planning the nitty-gritties of stays and commutes," she explains. While package tours have been around for ages, they didn't necessarily address the concerns faced by women travelling on their own, and this gap was filled by women-only travel groups.

Women-only travel groups give solo travellers a sense of safety and freedom. PICS CREDIT: WANDER WOMANIYA AND JUGNU TRAVELS (R)

However, all these companies had to contend with doubts at the fledgling stage. "We started small," Ananya says, adding, "the women were unsure about long trips so we started with weekend getaways. It was only when they realised how impeccably everything was planned that we started conducting longer tours."

Building trust

"Building trust was crucial," agrees Nitesh, who was discouraged by many, adding, "especially as I was a man to be in charge of a women's only trips," he adds. Suman*, who hails from Oman, recently travelled to Slovenia and Kazakhstan with Jugni, and found the trip well-planned and hassle-free. Poorly maintained toilets is a major pain point for women travellers, and Nitesh had to personally take up the task of cleaning of a toilet on one of the trips he organised.

"Once the mental block around travelling alone is removed," Shibani says, "it gives one wings! Solo travel is all about transformation." "When travelling solo, women are able to leave behind the responsibilities of home and work and let their hair down and re-discover themselves! I've seen spontaneous laughter connecting strangers on these trips."

Shibani adds that WeGoBond makes these trips unique by ensuring that the women on the trips get a taste of local cuisine and culture. "In Japan, we take our guests on a geisha walk," she points out, adding that in Odisha they introduced their guests to the sweet-dish chenna poda, unheard of outside the state — helping women travellers form lasting memories. "We also maintain an unhurried pace so that the trip actually does feel like a holiday not a chore," she adds. Mira Desai, who travelled with WeGoBond to Ajanta and Ellora remembers the relaxed feel of the trip.

Each group has its own USP. As Ananya of Wander Womaniya says, "We make sure that the hotels are not just centrally located, clean and spacious, we actually get a questionnaire done and ensure that roommates gel well." All these groups entrust responsible, well-informed and mature team leaders to ensure hassle-free trips and in the end, it all works out. The women's-only travel groups also help solo travellers form new bonds, sometimes reconnect with old aquaintances and travel more frequently.

*(*Some names have been changed to protect identity.)*

DECODED

Gender euphoria: What does it entail

Gender euphoria is a feeling of joy and comfort an individual feels about their gender identity and body. It comes when an individual is accepted and welcomed within a community or group. Gender euphoria may also be felt when an individual expresses their gender by way of choosing pronouns, attire, names and physical appearance — whatever they are most comfortable with. When gender expression is aligned with identity, it leads to lower stress and anxiety, and a better self-image.

Gender dysphoria is a feeling of anxiety and discomfort that arises when an individual feels out of place or not accepted in a specific group or community. They may feel at odds with their sex assigned at birth, and wish to dress, look and behave in a manner that is more aligned with a different gender identity. Not all trans or gender nonconforming individuals experience dysphoria.

*Curated by Savitha Karthik (***Decoded** *demystifies gender concepts and breaks them down into easy-to-understand language.)*

Travel

Get set & ski

Apart from being the world's largest interconnected ski area, Courchevel in the French Alps is also known for its flower-filled meadows, pine forests, and stunning mountain landscapes, writes Sonia Nazareth

Courchevel is part of Les Trois Vallées in the French Alps and the world's largest interconnected ski area. The acclaim for this location, known for its spectacular natural beauty, impressive skiing scene, and extensive range of sporting opportunities is universal. Courchevel comprises six interconnected villages, each situated at a different altitude.

The most prominent village, widely represented in the media and shaping its public image, is Courchevel 1850, which, as its name suggests, is located at an altitude of 1850 metres. With its five-star resorts, convenient access to ski runs, luxurious shops, and après-ski scene (post-ski activities), it is undoubtedly the most glamorous of the villages.

If you identify Courchevel solely with the materialist paradise that is 1850, much of the nuance of the place is obscured. The character of each village that comprises Courchevel is, in fact, unique. Courchevel 1650 and 1550, for instance, which are just a gondola ride away from 1850, offer family-friendly amenities, accommodation, and dining options that cater to a range of budgets.

But regardless of which village you choose to stay in, ski lifts and free shuttles connect you to the slopes. As I converse with the locals, I become increasingly aware that, aside from the adrenaline-pumping activities (skiing, sledging, snowshoeing, husky safaris, ice diving, snowmobile rides — all marvellous ways to experience the landscape), there is a profound cultural and introspective aspect to Courchevel.

Charm of St. Bon

St. Bon, at an altitude of 1,100 metres, is a revelation to me. This village, the birthplace of Courchevel, has maintained its authenticity. Before the introduction of hydroelectric power and the emergence of winter sports tourism, these valleys flourished with an agro-pastoral economy. Today, St. Bon continues to display its traditional charm.

The Alpine architecture and traditional chalets, featuring stone and wood exteriors, stand beside simple barns (where the livestock feed), an old mill, and a communal oven that line the narrow cobblestone streets, all seamlessly integrated into the surrounding landscape. And what a landscape it is. Glorious views of mountains and valleys capture my attention everywhere.

That is until I step inside the 17th-century St. Bon Church. Typical of an alpine environment, churches often feature simple façades with ornate interiors; this one is no exception. Inside, I am confronted by gilded wood, twisted columns, laughing cherubs, and sculpted flowers—all bursting with the vitality of folk art. In its characteristic Baroque expressiveness, the altar reflects the concerns and dogmas of the times in which it was created. In one striking altar piece, I see souls struggling in purgatory, serving as a reminder to the faithful of their obligation to attend Mass and underscoring the universal nature of death. Sacred art was thus often interwoven with dogma and concerns from everyday life, and saints were assigned specific roles that reflected the issues of the land. Saint Anthony, for instance, is the protector of mules; Saint Grat, the protector of crops; and Saint Bernard des Alpes, the protector of those lost in the mountains.

Ski slopes in Couchevel; village of Le Praz (above right). PHOTO BY AUTHOR

QUICK FACTS

- **The skiing season in Courchevel extends from December to late April. From the summer months till September, you can enjoy hiking, walks or biking.**
- **If you visit in summer, you get a chance to explore the alpine ecosystem and spot flora and fauna such as edelweiss, marmots and golden eagles.**

In the neighbouring village at 1,300 metres, Le Praz transports me back in time. There is a 15th-century chapel, a natural lake where locals fish for rainbow and brook trout, and a spruce forest. At the cafés, I savour products from the surrounding high-altitude pastures and farms. Delicacies such as chestnuts, wild fruits, and polenta, as well as cheeses like Beaufort and Reblochon, along with other Savoie specialities like honey, meat, and wine, are among the local treasures. Finally, I stroll past traditional houses to reach the iconic ski-jumping hill, Tremplin du Praz, built for the 1992 Winter Olympics.

Beyond snow activities

If you visit Courchevel solely for the snow activities, you miss some of the wonder of the place. Florent, a local resident, takes me on a walk to Lac de la Rosière, often described as the Green Diamond of the Alps. En route, we navigate breathtaking mountain scenery, including pine forests, waterfalls, and babbling brooks, before eventually strolling along a footbridge to what feels like an enchanted, turquoise lake.

Besides its magnificent hiking trails, Courchevel also serves as the entry point to Vanoise National Park, which celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2023.

Regardless of which path you choose from the network of over 500 km of hiking trails, you will be greeted by a diverse alpine ecosystem. In summer, amidst lush flower-filled meadows, pine forests, and stunning mountain landscapes, you may encounter the wild genepi plant, edelweiss, ibex, marmots, and golden eagles.

Ultimately, regardless of which village of Courchevel you choose to stay in, or which ski outfit or equipment you opt to rent, once you are in the lap of nature, facing the grandeur of the mountains—whether skiing, Nordic walking, or enjoying a kayak rideon the lake—everyone, irrespective of their bank balance, is likely to experience the same joys. Nature is truly the great equaliser.

Warming up to cold plates

If you thought summer indulgences are all about gelatos, kulfis or iced drinks, think again. This summer, upscale restaurants are crafting chilled servings that are more than just salads — bold flavourings and unusual pairings have turned cold plates into expressions of creativity, writes Deepa Natarajan Lobo

Tree tomato custard, Nila.

Yum sum-oh, Bar Sama.

Courgette crudo, Circa 11.

On a hot summer afternoon, an icy plate arrives in the elegant, light-filled space of Bar Sama in Bengaluru. It's not a scoop of gelato or a frosty kulfi, but something far more unexpected: a scallop and cold noodle sao nam. Centred around soft noodles in a coconutty broth with pickled ginger, tobiko pearls and a delicate scallop granita, which Chef and Partner Vichita Kumar gently mixes up before serving, the preparation takes everyone by surprise — it is slightly spicy, a little acidic and overall, refreshing.

Another interesting chilled creation at Bar Sama is yum sum-oh — a bright and citrusy pomelo and young coconut salad with yuzu and crispy beans (avarekai) layered with texture.

"Temperature and pairing are very intentional in these dishes. The Thai pomelo, with its high-water content and brightness is paired with Indian ingredients like coconut and avarekai to introduce contrast and blend crunch with softness," says Vichita. "We even freeze the plate when serving scallops or pomelo because colder temperatures enhance acidity and make ingredients feel crisper and sharper. It's not just for effect — it changes how you experience the plate."

This summer, upscale restaurants are experimenting with temperatures and crafting chilled bold-flavoured servings that are more than just salads.

A short drive from Bar Sama, at the intimate degustation restaurant Nila, Founder and Chef Rahul Sharma too is exploring the idea through an experiential lens. Dabbling with the traditions and techniques of Nagaland currently, he feels cold creations give him the perfect opportunity to play with refreshing, seasonal flavours.

A standout on his menu, the tree tomato custard is inspired by a simple tomato and cheese salad. It transforms the local GI-tagged Naga tomato into a multi-textured experience — a tomato jelly in the shape of a flower floating on chilled cheese custard with roasted perilla seeds for that contrasting crunch — served on a bed of ice. "You get creaminess from the custard, crispness from the sour tomato, crunch from the roasted perilla seeds and a temperature that is almost freezing," explains Rahul Sharma.

These icy indulgences are also borrowing from tradition. At Circa 11, Chef and Owner Pradyumna Harithsa sees cold plates as a natural extension of something familiar. "Cold, fresh preparations like kosambari and pachadis have always been an important part of Indian festive meals. What we're seeing now is a more global expression of that instinct," he observes.

Among its many chilled creations, Circa 11's latest menu features a white fish ceviche built with a sharp leche de tigre (a marinade) balanced by cucumber, mint, and chilli, while a courgette crudo uses the entire vegetable, paired with Sichuan peppercorn oil and pickled onion petals to create contrast without cooking. Even the choice of acid is deliberate – his seafood ceviche, part of an earlier menu, used a passion fruit ponzu for a softer acidity.

Elevated experience

Many older establishments across the city are also coming up with chilled servings that are precise, composed, and often the most expressive part of a menu. Chef Jyotika Malik, VP – Culinary of Olive Group, says, "Diners today don't see food as rigid courses of appetisers, mains, or desserts. They prefer a more fluid, shared way of eating and prefer to try a variety of smaller items. Meals are becoming more communal, and cold or room temperature dishes are easy to be shared and passed around," she says.

Her menus reflect this evolution, using fermented elements like kombucha gels and miso dressings, alongside global influences from mezze, tapas, and Middle Eastern cuisine.

At Bengaluru's Shiro, the cold plate section unfolds with a pan-Asian sensibility — with offerings like tuna tataki, hamachi carpaccio, and kampachi ceviche (fish dishes) sitting alongside an expansive selection of sushi and sashimi. Chef Priyank Singh Chouhan, Director – Culinary Operations, focuses on ingredients like mango, coconut, pandan, kaffir lime, and matcha, adding a new dimension to them with techniques like freezing, foaming, and texture layering. "Presentation also plays a big role — whether it's minimal plating, visible layering, or even tableside finishing, every element is designed to elevate the experience," he points out.

Instinctive cooking

At NÃVU, the fine dining restaurant known for its inventive, ingredient-led philosophy, co-founders Kanishka Sharma and Pallavi Mithika Menon take on a more instinctive approach. "We don't set out to create something cold. Sometimes, flavours just come together best without heat, and the dish reveals itself as cold," the duo reveals.

NÃVU's cool offerings range from mustard ice cream to cured sardines served on oil-soaked brioche with olive tapenade and tomato jam; and a vegan miso aubergine carpaccio layered with peanuts, ginger, and mulberries. "We cure a lot of our own meats and seafood. Many of our cold plates come from that process," they explain.

Serving an item cold has its own set of challenges. "Everything has to be prepared in advance and held at the right temperature. Ingredients behave differently when chilled, and even slight changes can affect the final composition. You might have six to eight components on a plate, and all of them have to come together perfectly," say Kanishka and Pallavi.

ORIGIN STORY

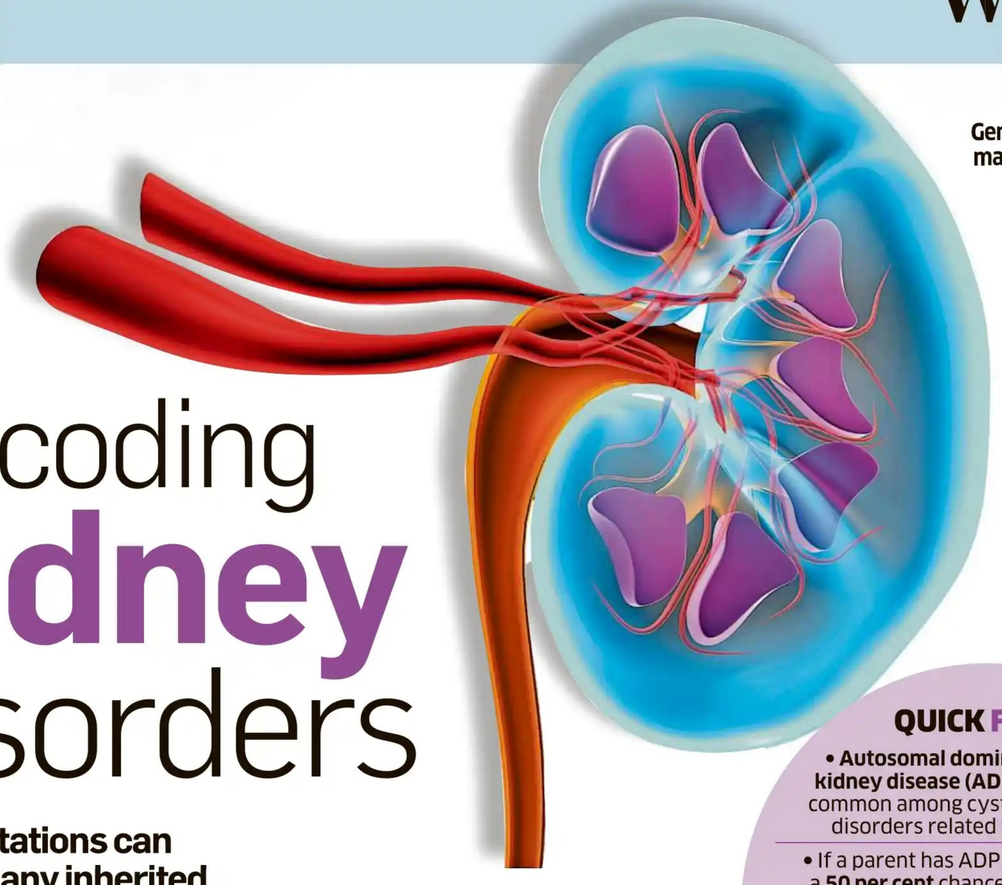
A scoop of history

Universally loved and cherished, ice cream, no matter what form or name – whether it is gelato or kulfi, sundae or the Japanese kakigori (shaved ice), has a global presence. There's no one single origin story to the ice cream – much like the many flavours and forms, ice cream has a multitude of stories around its evolution. Here are some of them:

- Ice cream in the form of an iced drink can be traced back to the Romans and Greeks. A popular legend is that Emperor Nero relished an iced drink with a flavour of honey and wine. According to author Laura Weiss, who traces the history of ice cream in her book 'Ice Cream - A Global History', Mesopotamia had ice houses 4,000 years ago, where snow and ice were stored in pits. The book also notes that ice harvesting and storage to preserve food was prevalent around 1100 BC, indicating that the Chinese may have made some form of iced dessert.
- The book, 'Ice Cream - The Delicious History' by Marilyn Powell, notes that China's T'ang rulers (seventh to tenth century AD) made a dish from milk mixed with rice and camphor that was chilled before it was served.
- Another popular origin story is that the Persians made frozen desserts by pouring fruit juice into snow, and later came up with falooda aka faludeh.
- Many attribute ice cream's origin to sherbet, which has been made since the medieval period. According to 'Of Sugar and Snow - A History of Ice Cream' by Jeri Quinzio, the "Persians served sherbets over ice in large porcelain or gold bowls and sipped them from long-handled wooden spoons." A popular legend, which remains in the realm of myth and has been debunked, is that Marco Polo travelled to China and returned with recipes for the Italian sorbetto or frozen desserts.
- In India, the kulfi was created during the Mughal era. 'Ain-i-Akbari', (by Abu'l Fazl) has a mention of the kulfi, made in the royal kitchen using khoya, notes Marilyn Powell in her book. 'Ain-i-Akbari' also describes the process of making ice, with the use of salt petre or potassium nitrate. It was only much later that cooks realised that even common salt could be used to make ice.
- The first hand-cranked ice cream maker was invented by American Nancy M Johnson, in the year 1843, for which she got a patent.
- The first English cookbook with an ice cream recipe is 'Mrs Mary Eales's Receipts', published in 1718, according to Powell's book.

*Curated by Savitha Karthik (**Origin Story** attempts to satiate your curiosity about the history of a certain ingredient or cuisine.)*

Wellness



Genetics play a role in many kidney-related conditions.

Decoding kidney disorders

Gene mutations can lead to many inherited kidney conditions such as autosomal polycystic kidney disease, which is among the most common. Genetic tests, a thorough assessment of family history, and early diagnosis play a key role, writes Dr Vishnuvardhan BR

Genetic conditions are among the common causes of kidney disease and kidney failure. Even though there is a high possibility of missing the diagnosis, it accounts for 10–15 per cent of adult patients and most paediatric patients who require dialysis or kidney transplantation. These genetic conditions may show up in different forms such as cyst formation, proteinuria (presence of excess protein in urine), affecting absorption of electrolytes and water.

Generally, genetic conditions affect multiple organs in the body, including eyes, ear, liver, skin, and brain. Looking thoroughly at family history provides a bigger hint about the diagnosis. Proper diagnosis helps in estimation of outcomes, right treatment, precautions and prevention. The diagnosis of a genetic condition can lead to significant mental stress on the family, which is why an early diagnosis and management of the health issue matters.

Cyst disorders

Cyst-forming disorders are one of the most common genetic disorders. Among them, autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease (ADPKD) is the most prevalent, and is characterised by multiple water-filled cysts in many organs such as the liver, and particularly the kidneys. These cysts increase in size and number as age progresses, and can eventually damage the kidneys. They may also cause aneurysms in the brain. The condition is called autosomal dominant because inheriting just one copy of the faulty gene from either parent is enough to cause the condition. It is most often caused by mutations in the PKD1 or PKD2 genes. There are numerous mutations and if a parent has ADPKD, each child has a 50 per cent chance of inheriting the mutation and developing the condition. This risk is the same for every pregnancy, regardless of the child's sex.

Silent progression

While ADPKD can appear at any age, many children with the mutated gene may not show symptoms until adulthood. While generally it causes kidney failure after the age of 40 years, it may cause kidney failure in the early stages of life also. The clinical pattern has to be predicted based on how other family members were affected before. Clinical comparison has to be within the same family. Genetic testing can confirm the presence of the mutation, but it's often done selectively because of emotional and medical implications. Early diagnosis will help slow the disease progression and avoid complications.

QUICK FACTS

- **Autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease (ADPKD)** is the most common among cyst-forming genetic disorders related to the kidneys.
- If a parent has ADPKD, each child has a **50 per cent** chance of inheriting the mutation and developing the condition.
- ADPKD symptoms include **high blood pressure, blood in urine, increase in size of abdomen** and **back pain**.
- Autosomal recessive PKD is another form of **kidney-related genetic disorder** but is rare, and is detected either prenatally or in infancy.

Rare variants

There are many other cyst-forming genetic conditions. When compared to ADPKD, fortunately, these are less common. Autosomal recessive polycystic kidney disease (ARPKD), tuberous sclerosis complex (TSC - marked by growth of noncancerous tumours), nephronophthisis (NPHP - impairment of kidney function), medullary sponge kidneys (MSKs - affects the innermost part of the kidney) and von Hippel-Lindau disease (VHL- rare, affecting multiple organs) are some of these conditions.

These diseases are identified based on age of onset, and assessment of whether other organs are involved, and if the kidney is enlarged or not, skin lesions, and presence (or not) of kidney stones, among others.

Filtration defects

The second set of genetic conditions affect the proteins in the glomerular basement membrane (GBM). This membrane is the main filtration site. Alport syndrome is the most common among them. It can lead to kidney disease, kidney failure, hearing loss and problems in the eyes. Blood in urine is one of the main symptoms.

Fabry disease affects kidney, heart, skin, nerves and brain. Another disease called nail patella syndrome causes absence of patellae (bone at front of knee joint), underdeveloped nails, elbow dysplasia (abnormal development of the elbow bones) and kidney problems.

Electrolyte issues

Genetic conditions lead to abnormality of water, sodium, potassium and calcium absorption. Poor absorption can lead to hypotension, hypertension, poor growth, muscle weakness, muscle paralysis, high or low potassium, acidosis or alkalosis, among other such problems.

Closely tracking the problem, followed by a need to further investigate, a detailed family history, thorough clinical examination and evaluation will help diagnose these genetic conditions. Genetic tests need to be used appropriately. An important aspect is to create awareness and educate family members, apart from providing counselling.

(The writer is a consultant – nephrology, transplant physician at a Bengaluru hospital.)

BIOHACK OF THE WEEK

Optimising renal health

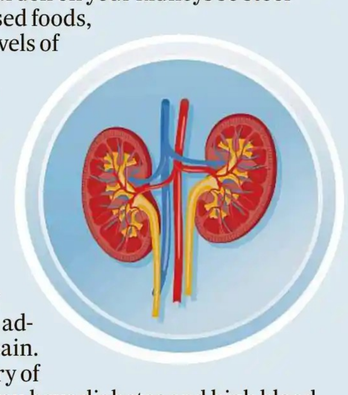
A study published in the 'International Journal of Urology and Nephrology' earlier this year has projected that by 2040, chronic kidney disease is likely to become "a top-five cause of death in India, with mortality potentially exceeding half a million annually." Chronic kidney disease is a condition where the kidneys, over the long-term, lose the capability to filter waste and excess fluid from your blood.

While CKD is just one of the kidney-related health concerns, there are other kidney-related issues such as kidney stones and polycystic kidney disease, some preventable and others manageable.

How does one ensure optimal kidney health?

Chronic kidney disease is often an outcome of poorly managed diabetes and high blood pressure. The first thing you need to do is ensure that your blood sugar levels are at reasonable levels. Get your HbA1c tests done twice annually at least, and make sure to get medication. Needless to mention, a low-sugar and low-carb diet helps. Also, ensure you get your medications for high blood pressure.

If you have already been diagnosed with CKD, eat foods that are low in sodium and potassium, as the two minerals can add a burden on your kidneys. Vegetables like cauliflower, bell pepper, cabbage and kale are high-nutrient, low-potassium options. For protein, ensure you have fish, egg whites and skinless poultry, apart from lean meats. Phosphorous-rich foods may also add to the burden on your kidneys so steer clear of canned and processed foods, which often contain high levels of phosphorous.



Also, avoid smoking as it curbs flow of blood to the kidneys, which in turn, affects the functioning of the organ. Avoiding alcohol is also important. Long-term use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) can damage your kidneys. Seek your doctor's advice to effectively manage pain.

If you have a family history of kidney-related issues, and you have diabetes and high blood pressure, get screenings and check-ups. Don't skip medications you have been prescribed for managing diabetes and hypertension.

If you have not been diagnosed with a kidney condition but want to take preventive steps, remember to focus on diet and exercise. Resistance training is a good form of exercise to optimise kidney health, as it lowers inflammation and boosts cardiovascular health. According to a University of Leicester University, UK study, a combination of aerobic and strength training exercises "reduces symptoms such as fatigue and stiffness, leading to major improvements in quality of life."

Curated by Savitha Karthik

*(**Biohack of the Week** offers actionable tips to optimise your wellbeing.)*

EYE ON DESIGN

Modern studios are approaching furniture as sculpture, pushing wood, stone, and concrete beyond their limits to create quirky, experimental forms, says Sowmya Putran

Chiselling a twist

Oreka centre table. (PIC COURTESY: TGF)

Across contemporary studios, furniture is being shaped with a sculptor's approach. Wood, stone and concrete are worked much like clay or metal, allowing the form to emerge from what each material can or cannot do. Many of these new designs experiment with unusual material pairings and quirky shapes.

At a studio focused on material experimentation, this idea is taken forward in a nature-inspired direction. Their Vana Lounge Chair follows a related idea. Forked wooden forms support a leaf-shaped seat, creating a structure that appears light but is carefully engineered to support weight. The designers at Intent Made studied how branches divide and distribute load in nature before translating that logic into the furniture.

"In many cultures, people gather under a tree for conversation and community. The branching structure of the Vana dining table reflects that image. It becomes a contemporary interpretation of that moment," shares Swetha Vegesana, founder of the firm.

Material selection plays a central role in the Vana pieces. Metal allowed the designers to sculpt fluid branching forms while maintaining structural integrity. Marble introduced a visual contrast against the twisting, branch-inspired shapes of the base. Brass inlay adds a subtle layer of ornamentation.

The Vana designs feel asymmetrical and dynamic. Nature rarely follows symmetry, yet it always feels balanced. That observation guided the designers' approach. The forms were intentionally made asymmetrical so that they carry a sense of movement and growth. What looks spontaneous is actually carefully balanced through structure, proportion and centre of gravity.

Their Sierra Sofa features twin curved backs that resemble mountain peaks. The sofa is built using bent wood techniques. Thin layers of wood are gradually bent and layered to create its sweeping curves, a method that makes those smooth, flowing lines possible. The curves are shaped to support the back comfortably.

Vana lounge chair. (PIC COURTESY: INTENT MADE)

Material matters

Teaming up with local artisans, Tectona Grandis Furniture (TGF), a furniture art venture, flips the focus onto materials. It all starts with reclaimed teak, pulled from 100 to 150-year-old beams and pillars salvaged from demolished buildings. Decades of ageing give the wood a natural strength. Reusing it keeps the material in circulation, giving it a new life instead of discarding it as waste, shares Dhruvkant Amin, co-founder of the firm. Across the collection, teak is paired with natural stone, marble, pigmented concrete, brass and metal. These unique material combinations are tactile and feel surprising.

This approach can be seen in the studio's centre table collection. Ripple takes cues from the circular movement of water when a drop strikes its surface. The teak top is constructed through radial joinery that spreads outward from the centre, creating a visual rhythm. A marble insert sits within the wooden frame, and its natural veining stands out against the wood. The stone artisans fit it carefully so it has enough room to expand and contract as temperatures change, notes Amin.

Shroom centre table. (PIC COURTESY: TGF)

In Wabi, the studio looks to natural formations and takes cues from wabi-sabi, where things do not have to be perfect or even, and those small irregularities are what give the piece its character. A curved stone top appears to hover, supported by carved teak legs beneath it. The form recalls rocks resting on tree roots or boulders balanced within a stream. The slightly lifted edges of the stone help ease its visual weight, making it feel lighter than it actually is.

In Oreka, balance is the central theme. A teak tabletop extends asymmetrically beyond its central axis, appearing almost as if it might tip. The visual tension is resolved by a sculpted wooden sphere that anchors the structure, while brass reinforcement ensures stability. The composition plays with balance and imbalance, something that shows up in nature and on a more cosmic scale, while also hinting at forms associated with the Shivling without being literal.

Another design, Piatto, looks at how landscapes can inspire furniture. Taking cues from terraced land and stepped terrain, the tabletop is made of layered surfaces. Stone and wood are shaped and arranged at different levels, so the surface resembles a small landscape. Creating this effect required close collaboration between stone cutters and wood carvers to ensure every layer aligned properly.

For complex forms, the designers use digitally guided milling, while the joinery and finishing are done by hand. The direction of the wood grain, the heft of stone, even how it subtly shifts over time, all shape the final form.

Shroom, a set of nested tables, borrows its form from mushrooms growing across a forest floor. At its centre is a pigmented concrete-based, texture with natural-looking fissures. From this stem rises a teak top arranged in a radial configuration that echoes sunburst grain patterns.

Designs like these blur the line between function and art. They're made for everyday use, but still have a way of making you stop and look at them like a sculpture.

Piatto centre table. (PIC COURTESY: TGF)

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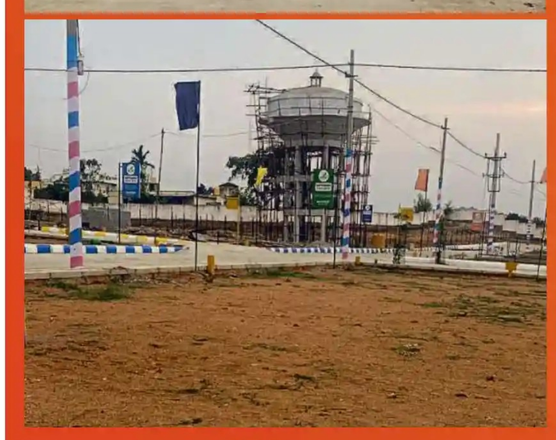

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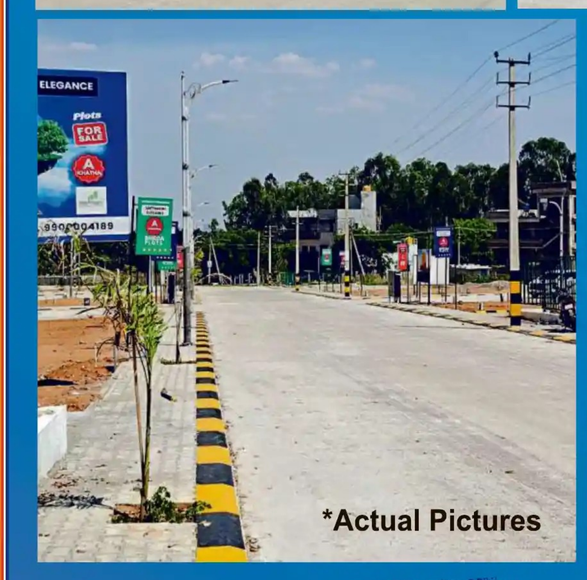

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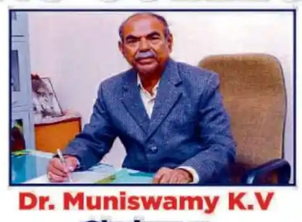
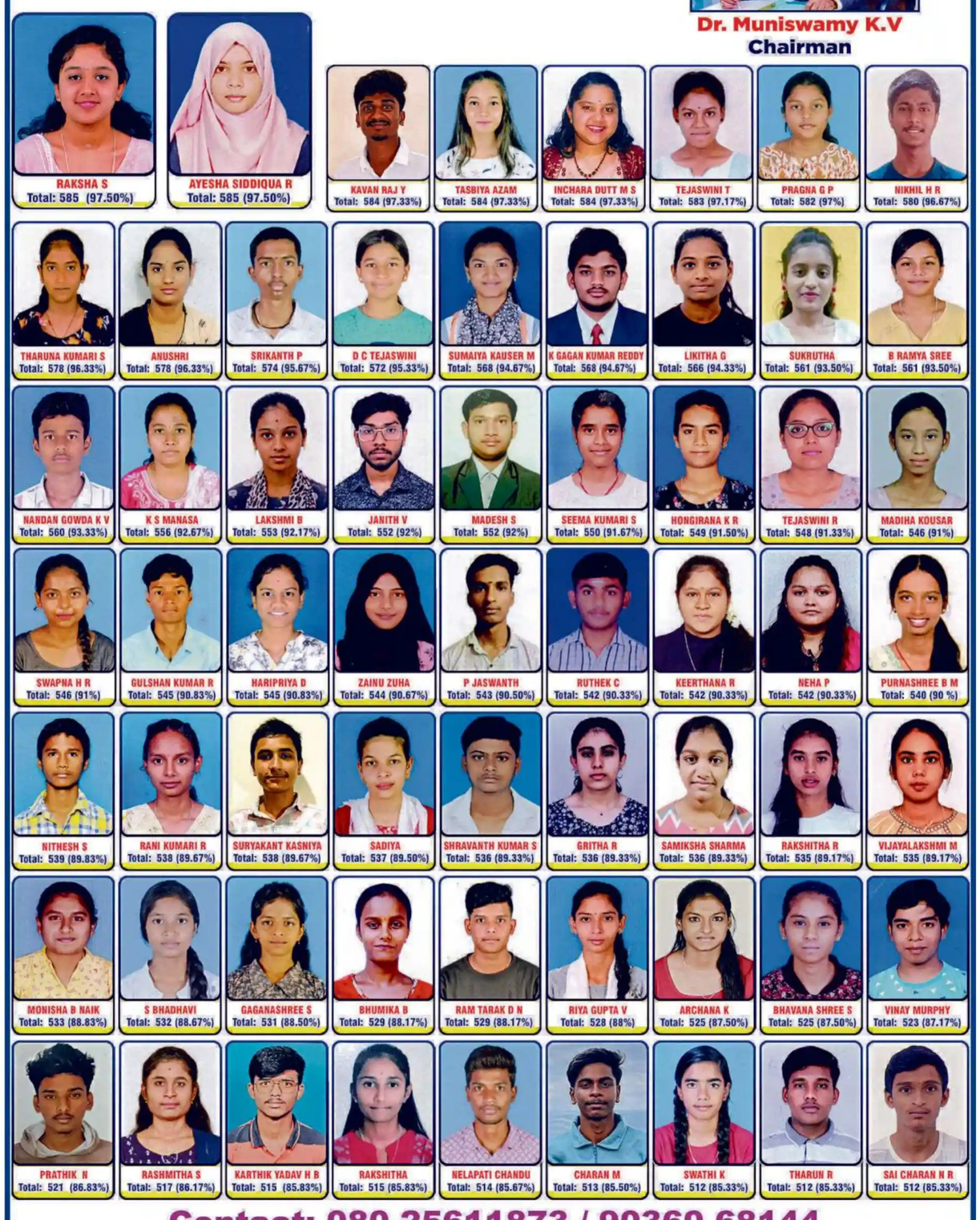

Dr. Muniswamy K.V
Chairman


RAKSHA S Total: 585 (97.50%)
AYESHA SIDDIQUA R Total: 585 (97.50%)
KAVAN RAJ Y Total: 584 (97.33%)
YASBIYA AZAM Total: 584 (97.33%)
INCHARA DUTT M S Total: 584 (97.33%)
TEJASWINI T Total: 583 (97.17%)
PRAGNA G P Total: 582 (97%)
NIKHIL H R Total: 580 (96.67%)
THARUNA KUMARI S Total: 578 (96.33%)
ANUSHRI Total: 578 (96.33%)
SRIKANTH P Total: 574 (95.67%)
D C TEJASWINI Total: 572 (95.33%)
SUMAIYA KAUSER M Total: 568 (94.67%)
K GAGAN KUMAR REDDY Total: 568 (94.67%)
LIKITHA G Total: 566 (94.33%)
SUKRUTHA Total: 561 (93.50%)
B RAMYA SREE Total: 561 (93.50%)
NANDAN GOWDA K V Total: 560 (93.33%)
K S MANASA Total: 556 (92.67%)
LAKSHMI B Total: 553 (92.17%)
JANITH V Total: 552 (92%)
MADESH S Total: 552 (92%)
SEEMA KUMARI S Total: 550 (91.67%)
HONGIRANA K R Total: 549 (91.50%)
TEJASWINI R Total: 548 (91.33%)
MADIHA KOUSAR Total: 546 (91%)
SWAPNA H R Total: 546 (91%)
GULSHAN KUMAR R Total: 545 (90.83%)
HARIPRIYA D Total: 545 (90.83%)
ZAINU ZUHA Total: 544 (90.67%)
P JASWANTH Total: 543 (90.50%)
RUTHEK C Total: 542 (90.33%)
KEERTHANA R Total: 542 (90.33%)
NEHA P Total: 542 (90.33%)
PURNASHREE B M Total: 540 (90 %)
NITHESH S Total: 539 (89.83%)
RANI KUMARI R Total: 538 (89.67%)
SURYAKANT KASNIYA Total: 538 (89.67%)
SADIYA Total: 537 (89.50%)
SHRAVANTH KUMAR S Total: 536 (89.33%)
GRITHA R Total: 536 (89.33%)
SAMIKSHA SHARMA Total: 536 (89.33%)
RAKSHITHA R Total: 535 (89.17%)
VIJAYALAKSHMI M Total: 535 (89.17%)
MONISHA B NAIK Total: 533 (88.83%)
S BHADHAVI Total: 532 (88.67%)
GAGANASHREE S Total: 531 (88.50%)
BHUMIKA B Total: 529 (88.17%)
RAM TARAK D N Total: 529 (88.17%)
RIYA GUPTA V Total: 528 (88%)
ARCHANA K Total: 525 (87.50%)
BHAVANA SHREE S Total: 525 (87.50%)
VINAY MURPHY Total: 523 (87.17%)
PRATHIK N Total: 521 (86.83%)
RASHMITHA S Total: 517 (86.17%)
KARTHIK YADAV H B Total: 515 (85.83%)
RAKSHITHA Total: 515 (85.83%)
NELAPATI CHANDU Total: 514 (85.67%)
CHARAN M Total: 513 (85.50%)
SWATHI K Total: 512 (85.33%)
THARUN R Total: 512 (85.33%)
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IInd PUC Toppers 25-26

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97.66%

Yashaswini R
97.66%

Amrutha G
96.66%

Monika Bai H
95%

Bharath I B
93.5%

Rajath O
93.33%

Mayurakrishna Rao N
93%

Harshitha S
92.66%

Haleema Sadiya
92%

H M Vinushree
91.83%

Manjunath Y N
91.66%

Sunitha M
91.66%

Hemanth T
90.5%

Amulya S
87.83%

Rakshith Prasad K
85.83%

Yashwin Gowda V B
85.33%

SCIENCE

Manvitha H Gowda
96.5%

Chandana Pawar
96%

Thanushree S
95.33%

Vasudha D H
94.33%

Sneha Kirana Raju
93.83%

M Vidhya
93.66%

Sinchana G
93.16%

Yashwanth K
92.5%

Reethu Yadav N
91.5%

Ramesha P
91.33%

Shreyas R Gowda
91.16%

Thanu Shree L S
91%

Srinidhi H S
90.83%

Chandan Raj G
90.66%

Sujal Madhav Torvi
90%

Srinivas L
89.83%

Chinmayi S K
88.66%

Avani Bhat
88%

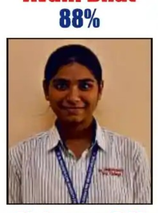
Dixitha B R
87%

Mahati N
86.83%

Ananya Devamma G N
86.5%

Lakshmi S N
86%

Aishwarya M
86%


Aishwarya B M
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(CEBA)
98%

MANASA S
(CEBA)
97%

RAMYA SHREE
(CEBA)
94%

FASIHA ANJUM
(CEBA)
93%

BHUVAN OKAHDA
(CEBA)
92%

DEEPTHI B V
(CEBA)
92%

SRUSTI K
(CEBA)
91.3%

SHASHI KUMAR Y
(CEBA)
89%

THARAKRAM REDDY B
(CEBA)
87%

JAVERIA BANU
(CEBA)
85.1%

MOHAMMED AFNANH
(CEBA)
84%

SHANTHA KUMARI
(CEBA)
83%

SANEYA BEGUM
(CEBA)
83%

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BANASHANKARI 6TH STAGE- BDA-AVAILABLE/ WANTED 20x30, 30x40 40x60, 50x80 SITES. BRINDAVAN ASSOCIATES-9980863245/ 9945333993

BANASHANKARI 6TH Stage, 11th Block, 20x30 West Facing Site Sale. 1.10Cr. Direct Owner.Call: 9844947990, 8431089761.

BSK 2ND Stage Sale 1925 Site East Facing Top Location Near Devagiri. Rs.42K Negotiable Shivu: 9880004149.

BANASHANKARI 6TH Stage 1st Block. 30x40 Site For Sale Near NPS School. Brokers Excuse. 9686026739.

Hebbal

HEBBAL FLYOVER Near, New House, Lease 2 BHK, 2nd Floor, Car Parking Call: 9845623970/ 9739400838

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INDIRANAGAR, DOMLURU, 50x60 Site, opp. Embassy Tech Park prime location, Sale 32,000/- Sft. (Genuine Buyers only) -9845000299.

Jigani

BMRD APPROVAL Sites sale good location 30x50 near Jigani Anekal Road opposite Chanrakanta Layout rate 3800/- sqft. Contact: 9964031112.

Kempegowda Layout

BDA SITE SALE @ NADAPRABHU KEMPEGOWDA LAYOUT40x60 Semi Commercial,50x80 - Commercial 300feet road,163x100 BDA Single-Plan "11A"Katha Site. Contact:9686469799

KEMPEGOWDA LAYOUT 6th Block BDA, Site No.1431 20x30 Near BDA Complex South Facing: 7349549087/ 7899322459

"KEMPEGOWDA BDA 65x85 East BDA Approved, 45ft Road close to Peripheral Ring Road. Rate: ₹7500/-. 9845314932"

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Magadi Road

MAGADI MAIN ROAD: GOLLARAHATTI near Orchid School 30x40 East BBMP E Katha Sale 9,000/-: 9845088773

Multiple Locations

BANASHANKARI 6TH Stage, Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout, Vishweshwariah, BDA Site, Houses are available. Contact: 9900999919.

Nelamangala

BYRASHETTYHALLI AISHWARYA County BMRDA 40X60,East And Banashankari BDA 30X40,Sites For Sale : 9620117773/9845857006

Rajajinagar

SALE 30X58 East Face near East West School Rs. 25000/- per sqft. (Slight Neg.) Rajajinagar 2nd stage. Call- 9538084444

Vishweshwariah Layout

"COMMERCIAL SITE 50x80 South facing for Sale Vishveshwaraiah BDA 7th Block, Good location. Contact: 9945067266"

DIRECT OWNER 30x40 Opp Park Facing Site-sale VISHWESHWARAIAH LAYOUT BLOCK-2 Full Developed Area. Contact:9742681666

SMV LAYOUT 50x80 NF BDA 6th BLOCK COMMERCIAL SITE KLE LAW COLLEGE RATE 6.95CR: 9108133156

DIRECT OWNER 40x60 EF Site Sale VISHWESHWARAIAH LAYOUT BLOCK-1 Behind 100ft Road, Bank loan Available: 8496030007/ 8310885235

30X32 NORTH Site Sale Janabarathi BDA Allotti Amma School Back Side Park & 40x60 North 2nd Block Vishweshwaraiah Layout 9500/- Soft: 9535111055

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Vidyaranyapura

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Kengeri

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Sarjapur Road

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BTM Layout

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HOUSE FOR SALE- BTM 1ST STAGE, 2240 SQFT DUPLEX, 6 BHK, 4 BATHS, PRIME LOCATION. CALL: 9035361303

Bannerghatta Road

BANNERGHATTA ROAD, Kodichikkana Halli Near Vijay Bank Layout, 20x34, East, 30' Road, Unfinished Building, 1,10,00,000/- 9739995042

J P Nagar

J.P.NAGAR_7TH, Bank of`Baroda Layout Near_Bridge Milenium 40x57,`East, 3_BHK Duplex`House`& 4`units 1 BHK House-4,00,00,000/- 9739995042

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Business

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